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THE DECISIVE BATTLES  
OF MODERN TIMES



# THE DECISIVE BATTLES OF MODERN TIMES

BY

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WITH MAPS

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## PREFACE

THE Preface to *The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World* is couched in apologetic strain. So contrary were projects of violence and warfare to the then Spirit of the Age that Sir Edward Creasy was uneasy lest his choice of subject might betray "a strange weakness or depravity of mind." The words were written in 1851 when the long period of peace which succeeded Waterloo had scarcely been disturbed—a period in which a generation had grown to manhood without even the memory of war. It was an era in which the sufferings and misery of the Napoleonic struggles had been followed by a strong and steady growth of generous and humane ideals—the era of emancipation and reform, of the revision of the penal code, of a wide philanthropy, of legislation for factory and mine, of the Oxford movement, and of the evangelical revival. And it was the era of the Universal Peace Society, with its visions of a lasting golden age.

Like an insubstantial pageant these dreams faded and dissolved. Within a brief space four Great Powers were engaged in Europe, and the sixty years which followed the publication of Creasy's classic are distinguished by a violent recrudescence of war in every quarter of the globe. For even excluding all those minor struggles which can be technically described as "small" wars, and omitting entirely from consideration the greatest of all wars so lately upon us, the outburst of violence is still remarkable. Between 1851 and 1914, the latter date excluded, the civilized

nations here given have had recourse to the arbitrament of the sword: Austria,\* Bulgaria,\* Chili, China,\* Denmark, England,\* France,\* Greece,\* Germany,\* Italy,\* Japan,\* Mexico, Orange Free State, Persia, Peru, Roumania, Russia,\* Serbia,\* Spain, Transvaal, Turkey,\* and the United States.\* Where an asterisk has been added, it is to signify that the nation so distinguished has been engaged in more than one war. Clearly, therefore, from the point of view of material available there is a case for an attempt to carry on the history so ably begun by Sir Edward Creasy.

Broadly speaking, the term "decisive" in this volume has been interpreted in the sense with which it was used by Hallam, who in his description of the great victory of Charles Martel maintained that "it could justly be reckoned among those few battles of which a contrary event would have essentially varied the drama of the world in all its subsequent scenes." The selection of the battles which can pass such test is obviously a matter of no little difficulty, and, as Creasy himself declared, "it is probable that no two historical enquirers will agree entirely in their list. Different minds will naturally vary in the impressions which particular events make upon them." The account of each battle included in this volume is, however, followed by a brief statement of its claims to be considered decisive, which, it is hoped, will be held to justify its selection.

The best thanks of the author are due to the proprietors of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* for permission to make use of portions of an article on the Battle of the Marne contributed by him to the twelfth edition of that work; and to Captain W. E. Garrett Fisher, M.C., for much kindly and helpful advice while this book was being written.

*July, 1922.*

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## VICKSBURG

4TH JULY, 1863

SEE MAP 1

“The fall of Vicksburg sealed the fate of the Confederacy.”

U. S. GRANT, *Personal Memoirs*.

TO understand aright the cause or combination of causes which gave rise to the great Civil War in America it is necessary to bear in mind three features which distinguished the so-called United States at the time when they “wrenched their rights” from the Mother Country; these were, the sovereignty which was inherent in each State; the institution of slavery; and the existence of a vast hinterland into which any expansion of population must infallibly flow.

The “Thirteen United States of America,” which in 1776 declared their independence of Great Britain, were so many distinct colonies distributed unevenly along over a thousand miles of Atlantic coast-line, and in the treaty of peace which brought hostilities to a close Great Britain specifically recognized the independence of each individual State. These States not unnaturally set about to devise the formation of a

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union or mutual bond, and to the Constitution which was drawn up to provide a system of national government the preamble stated that such Constitution was "established and ordained by the people of the United States." The expression was interpreted at the time, generally but not universally, to mean that the authority for the Union was drawn not from the population of the total States at large, but from the peoples of each State for itself. Ambiguity was thus present at an early stage, a condition which was due to the half-developed sense of nationality which then existed, and it was to the divergence of views held as to the scope of that bond that the Civil War can in part be traced. In one portion of the country the Union came to be regarded as constituting a permanent and unquestionable national entity from which it was flat rebellion for a State or any other combination of persons to secede. To the remainder, however, the Union appeared merely as a peculiarly venerable treaty of alliance, of which the dissolution would be very painful, but which left each State a sovereign body with an indefeasible right to secede if, in the last resort, it judged that the painful necessity had arisen. In other words, one portion maintained—and the other flatly denied—that the separate States were sovereign after, no less than before, the Constitution; that the Union was purely voluntary; and that the peoples of the sum of several States, or the people as a whole, had no right to maintain or enforce the Union against any other State.

These views were held in no lukewarm manner, but with passionate conviction by the two sections of the United States which, with sufficient accuracy, can be described as "The North" and "The South." But it is obvious that such a complete divergence of views

on a constitutional question could not have been entirely due to the geographical situation of the persons holding them. Something more than mere accident of birth north or south of an arbitrary line must have existed to split the population of America into two rival camps ; and the feature above all others which led the two sections of America to take diametrically opposite views on the question of the Union was the institution of slavery.

In the first census taken after the Constitution—that of 1790—the population of the United States was estimated at four millions, of whom something over half a million were slaves of African birth or blood. Although years later the decision was delivered, in the famous Dred Scott case, that slaves were chattels, simply things not persons, such view did not prevail at the time of the adoption of the Constitution, when a slave was merely held to be a person from whom personal rights were temporarily withheld. In accordance with this sentiment most of the Northern States of the Union were even then on the high road towards abolition. Even in the Southern States, later to be identified closely with the system, there was a strong feeling against the perpetuation of slavery. Washington, Jefferson—who once exclaimed, “ I tremble for my country if God is just ”—George Mason and other thinking men of the South were bitterly opposed to it, and in the Southern States there existed societies for its abolition. At the convention of 1787, to which every State of the original thirteen—with the exception of Rhode Island—had sent delegates to frame a national government, the question of slavery had naturally come to the fore, and the opponents and supporters of the slave trade had compromised by agreeing to maintain it for twenty years. It is worthy

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of note that strong opposition to this compromise came from Virginia of the South, and that among the warmest champions of it were the New England States of the North. But, though the statement is worth recording, too much should not be read into it, for historians are wont to attribute different motives to those States according as their own bias is pro-North or pro-South. While to some the protest of Virginia seems the index of a high-souled humanity, to others her protest was the outcome of the fact that she had enough slaves of her own already, that by shutting down the slave trade these would rise in value, and that she thus stood to gain by the stoppage of importation. Again, while some historians assert that the New England States favoured the continuance of importation as being a source of profit to themselves, others take the view that they assented to the compromise from a statesmanlike willingness to make such concessions to the South as would induce her to stand by the Union.

Broadly speaking, however, it may be said that the South was pro-slavery, while the North was opposed to the system, a condition which was brought about by the difference in characteristics between the two sections of the country. The North was, on the whole, unfavourable to slave labour. Slavery had been accepted only under compulsion; it was not profitable; and repeated attempts had been made in the colonial days to cut off the slave trade and to stop the source of supply, efforts which had, however, been disallowed by the King in Council. Farms were small and the sterility of the soil necessitated intelligent and diversified tillage for which the African negro, working under compulsion, was unsuited. Further south, however, in the tobacco plantations of Virginia

and Maryland, negro labour was in many ways an effective and economical form of labour. But although it would be correct to say that the Southern States attached far more importance to the existence of slavery than did the North, there was not, at the time of the establishment of the Union, such a bias in favour of the system as to make it seem probable that slavery would develop into a serious source of dissension between the two sections of the country.

What really riveted slavery on the South was the invention—by a Northerner—of a simple mechanical contrivance, merely a wooden roller with spikes, the cotton gin. When the colonies received their independence the export trade in cotton from America was insignificant, for the task of separating the fibre from the seed was laboriously performed by hand. In 1793, however, a young graduate from Yale, while on a visit to Georgia, invented a machine for cleaning the cotton of its seeds, which was destined to exercise a profound influence, economical, social and financial, on the New World. The export of cotton jumped from 192,000 lbs. in 1791 to 6,000,000 lbs. in 1795, and, like all effective mechanical inventions, the cotton gin, although invented to save labour, by its very efficiency provided labour with more and more work. The land available being practically illimitable more and more cotton was grown. Slave labour had been found, or was believed, to be especially economical in cotton growing. Slavery, therefore, rapidly became the mainstay of wealth and of the social system in South Carolina and throughout the far South, while for the Southern States just outside the cotton belt the breeding and sale of slaves was found to be a profitable profession.

Apart from the financial advantages to the cotton

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planters there were other factors which favoured the continuance of slavery in the South. Although the negroes had no political rights they were allowed to count as three-fifths of their total for the purposes of white representation, and five negroes could be maintained at a rate far lower than three white labourers. Slavery, therefore, provided voting power, and by its cheapness it was favourable to the growth of a leisured ruling class. Where men are masters they are likely to be statesmen, to have a wide outlook on affairs, and to develop an instinct and habit of leadership. This advantage had from the first given the South a marked pre-eminence in affairs. Her statesmen had led the nation in the era of the Revolution; the Union was largely of her making; and for thirty-two out of the first forty years of its existence Virginian statesmen had occupied the presidential office. Inevitably the prosperity and dominance of the South appeared to be bound up with the existence and perpetuation of the slave system. Nevertheless, as years went by, the country was growing away from the South, and by 1850 the fact was apparent to thinking men of the Southern States. While America, as a whole, had been developing at an amazing pace the South had practically stood still. Her order was fixed and unchangeable, and it was an order which did not favour the immigration of a manufacturing and producing class. The South could not compete with the North in the establishment of manufactures because her labour supply was unsuited to their successful development; nor could she compete with the North in building new States in the West unless she were permitted to take with her to the newly opened territories the slave system upon which she had relied at home.



This expansion of the original thirteen States into the vast regions known loosely as the West is the third feature to which attention was called in the opening paragraph of this chapter. By purchase from Napoleon I, by victory over Mexico, and by successful struggles against the Indian tribes, the dominions of the United States by the middle of the nineteenth century came to be as we now know them. In this process of expansion a constitutional question was opened up. Whereas Congress had no right whatever to interfere with the existence of slavery in any original State of the Union, it did claim the right to prohibit the system in any new State which would owe its very existence to an act of Congress itself. By the year 1820 nine new States had been added to the original thirteen. It was extremely repugnant to the North that these new States should be admitted with constitutions which admitted slavery; on the other hand, the South was desirous of their admission as slave States for two reasons. Were slavery to be debarred in these new States they would practically be closed to Southern planters who wished to migrate to unexhausted soil and to carry with them the labour system to which they were accustomed. Further, it was clear that the North would soon have a large preponderance in population over the South, and to neutralize such superiority it was important from the Southern point of view to ensure that the number of slave-holding States should at least equal that of the States where slavery was prohibited. A compromise was arrived at by admitting two States almost simultaneously, one—Maine—as a free, and the other—Missouri—as a slave State. Further, it was enacted that north of an arbitrary line of latitude slavery should be for ever unlawful, while by tacit agreement

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it was to be permitted south of it. The system, however, proved unworkable, the real truth being that by the middle of the nineteenth century any extension of slavery was impossible, both because the world had become more humane and because slavery as a system was bound to interfere with the growth of the Labour movement. The truth of the latter contention is revealed in the admission of California as a free State. That territory had been conquered from Mexico, and by the compromise of 1820 it was to be supposed that slavery would be introduced. But the discovery of gold brought about an influx of rough, hardy whites, who, in applying for admission for California as a State, framed their constitution so as absolutely to forbid slavery. To these highly paid workers the influx of cheap slave labour seemed then as intolerable as the introduction of Chinese coolies to the coal-fields of Glamorganshire would seem to the Welsh pitmen of to-day. The South had been largely instrumental in bringing about the war with Mexico and now found herself robbed of the very cream of the territory for which she had made such efforts.

The next ten years are distinguished by a welter of compromises, claims, decisions and active hostilities over the question of slavery which was now the leading issue in the country. It was the decade in which was given to the world the greatest piece of propaganda ever written—*Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Translated into twenty-three languages it focussed the attention of tens of millions of people upon a question which hitherto had been to them but a name. The period culminated in a bloody struggle in the territory of Kansas between the pro- and anti-slavery factions, the two powers mustering considerable armies, fighting battles, capturing towns and paroling prisoners. In



the end the pro-slavery faction was beaten, though it was not until 1861 that Kansas was formally admitted as a free State. It was in these years of chaos that the presidential election of 1860 was fought out, almost entirely on the slavery question. Four candidates were in the field, representing various shades of opinion on the great issue. Out of nearly 4,700,000 votes, Lincoln received 1,900,000, and though this number fell short of an actual majority he was legally elected President. The crucial question in the election had been the territorial extension or restriction of slavery, and the Republican party, of which Lincoln was the nominee, was pledged to its restriction. The Democrats of the South wished to extend slavery, and despite their defeat at the polls they could command a majority in Congress and assert their rights in ample measure. This power was not ample enough for the more fiery of the Southern leaders whose passions were at fever heat. Secession measures were at once put into play, and before the New Year of 1861 had dawned South Carolina had declared her independence. Other Southern States in turn passed ordinances of secession—four of them seceding only when Lincoln called upon them for their quota of troops—and a Confederacy was formed. The North treated secession as rebellion, and thus the two portions of the Union were arrayed against each other in civil strife.

The Southern States seceded nominally because there had been elected as President a candidate who had received the support of the extreme Abolitionists. Slavery *per se* was not the entire cause of the rupture, and the truth of this statement is borne out by statistics. Of over eight million whites in the fifteen slave-owning States only 346,000 were actual slave-holders,

and of these nearly seventy thousand owned no more than one negro apiece ; and it has been claimed that three-fourths of the white Southern population derived more injury than benefit from the presence of four million serfs. Jefferson Davis, the Confederate President, distinctly declared that the South was not fighting for slavery, and in fact he embarked on the enterprise of secession fully conscious that, whatever the result of the struggle might prove to be, the days of slavery were numbered ; while, in the North, Lincoln, in 1862, wrote that his paramount object was to save the Union and was neither to save nor to destroy slavery. " If," he said, " I could save the Union without freeing a single slave I would do it ; if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it ; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would do that too." It is significant of the comparative unimportance of the question of slavery that of the Southern military leaders General Joseph Johnson never owned a slave, nor did A. P. Hill, nor Fitzhugh Lee. The cavalry leader, J. E. B. Stuart, never owned more than two, and he had parted with these long before the war. And there is something of irony in the fact that whereas the great Confederate commander Lee, years before the war, emancipated the few slaves that had come to him by inheritance, his famous opponent Grant held on to those that had come to him by marriage with a Southern lady until they were compulsorily freed by law.

The real truth was that by 1861 North and South had resolved themselves into what might almost be called two distinct nations. Their ideals, their customs and their outlook were wholly different. The South was purely agricultural, while the most prosperous

part of the North was largely industrial, with the result that in the former there was a dominant landed aristocracy, while in the Northern States the only aristocracy which counted was that of wealth. There was little purely national sentiment. The planter of the Southern States did not say, "I am an American," but "I am of the South"; and he thought of his Northern fellow-countrymen not as fellow-Americans but as "Dutch and Yankees." More serious than the difference of views on caste and ancestry was the divergence created by the different economic conditions of the two sections of the country. To the cotton and tobacco trade of the South free trade was necessary, while the Northern manufacturers, struggling against the competition of foreign imports, clamoured for protection which they were powerful enough to secure. The feeling of dislike which had grown up in the South towards the men and things of the North was inflamed by the loud threats and hysterical ravings of the demagogues of the Abolitionist and "Black Republican" parties, and these threats the South interpreted as preliminary to an attack upon State rights. In their resentment over the victory which the detested Yankees had won on the question of the non-extension of slavery the Southerners had no difficulty in persuading themselves that the tirades of the Abolitionists represented the true feelings of the North. It seemed not improbable that the next step by the North would be to overwhelm the Southern States, to reduce them to provinces, and to wrest from them the freedom which they had inherited. Convinced that such was the underlying intention of the North, and convinced no less of their own indefeasible right to secede, the Southern States determined to cut themselves adrift from a Union which

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had come to be dominated by ideas intensely repugnant to them.

The die was now cast, and in the contest which was to be fought out by armed strength it seemed as if the odds were greatly in favour of the North. Twenty-two States were arrayed against half that number, and in white population the Southerners were outnumbered by more than three to one. In material, resources and in everything which was requisite for the manufacture of munitions of war the advantage was altogether with the North. Further, the Confederacy was singularly vulnerable in one important respect. The navy belonged, so far as material was concerned, to the Union; and, unlike the military officers, who as a rule threw in their lot with the portion of the country from which they were sprung, very few naval officers seceded from the United States service. The products of the South were carried in vessels owned, built and manned by the North, and the South was devoid both of a seafaring population and of the means to construct or to repair vessels to any great extent. The Confederacy was thus certain to be isolated, and so important was the question of naval supremacy that the statement has been made that had the Confederate States been able to construct an efficient marine engine the history of the war might have been changed. Nevertheless, the land-owning class in the South was a class in which military virtues thrived. It supplied a large quota of the officer caste to the United States Army, and in 1852 the preponderance of capable Southern officers had caused some concern to the Federal authorities. In that year Jefferson Davis—who was to become in 1861 the President of the Confederacy—was Secretary of War, and shortly after his appointment having

occasion to go through the list of officers for promotion on the raising of several new regiments, it was found that on their military record the number of those of Southern birth would be so much larger than that from the North that it was deemed advisable to maintain a geographical equality for political reasons. In the decade which preceded the Civil War the preponderance of Southern officers at Headquarters of the United States Army was very marked, for in that time the South provided an Adjutant-General, a Quartermaster-General, and two Secretaries for War.

But even allowing for the special military aptitude of the South the balance of military advantage was altogether on the side of the North. Nevertheless, it required prodigious numbers and a protracted struggle before the South was eventually crushed. The war lasted four years, and in that time there were fought in all over two thousand battles and skirmishes. It has been estimated that there were over one hundred and twelve land battles in which one side or the other lost over five hundred in killed or wounded, and nearly two thousand engagements in which at least one regiment participated on either side. By 1865 the North had over a million of men under arms, and it has been calculated that the total losses on each side amounted to half a million soldiers, who either perished in the field or died at home from the results of exposure, wounds or disease contracted on duty. The colossal nature of the struggle was due in the first place to the fact that the armies were not composed of professional soldiers—for the regulars of the United States were a mere handful—and secondly and chiefly to the size of the territory which had to be subdued by the victors. The eleven Confederate States embraced an

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area of more than 733,000 square miles, equal to the combined areas of Great Britain, France, Spain, Germany and Switzerland, and these States had a coast-line of some 3500 miles with an interior border of just double that distance.

The military plan of the North was first to use its sea power to isolate the South. Secondly, in conjunction with the army, flotillas were to work up and down the Mississippi from New Orleans and Cairo respectively and to cut the Confederacy in two. There were two theatres of war, East and West, of which the latter was the more important in a military sense, the former in a political one. In the East the greatest conflicts of the war took place. Curiously enough in a theatre of war of such vastness the capitals of both opponents were situated but little over one hundred miles from each other. The possession of Washington and Richmond was constantly sought by the armies of the South and North respectively, and the tide of war, therefore, in the East surged back and forth across a relatively small portion of Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, and it was in this sector that the final surrender of the Confederacy took place. Here, generally speaking, the Confederates stood upon the defensive, while the North, pledged to compel the South to re-enter the Union, adopted a policy of attack. The Confederates, it is true, more than once took the offensive and invaded Northern territory, but their general policy was formulated by Jefferson Davis when he said, "all we ask is to be left alone."

In the West the course of the war was entirely different. Beyond the Alleghanies there was no one point which called for extraordinary defensive efforts, dictated solely by political considerations, as was the case with Washington and Richmond. In the West



there was, on the other hand, a great military territorial objective, the possession of the Mississippi River, by gaining and holding which the Union armies would not only possess a great natural highway and line of communications for future operations, but would cut off the Confederacy from the fertile resources of Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas. The importance of the Mississippi was clearly realized by both sides early in the struggle, and during the winter of 1861 Federals and Confederates made strenuous efforts to provide fleets to operate on its waters. The advantage in material was so largely with the North that the South was compelled to resort to a policy of creating strong posts on the river with the object of neutralizing the superiority which the Northerners enjoyed in ships. The most northern post was Columbus, and further down the river fortifications had been raised at Island No. 10, New Madrid and Fort Pillow. Next came the town of Vicksburg, a place of great natural strength but which the Confederates did not adequately fortify until well on in 1862. At the mouth of the Mississippi was New Orleans, defended by the forts of Jackson and St. Philip.

The contest for possession of the Mississippi resolved itself into the seizure of sections of it north and south by Union forces, leaving the Confederates masters of a long intervening stretch until the capture of Vicksburg gave the Federals undisputed control of the great waterway. Successful land operations in 1862 by the Union forces in the West led to the evacuation by the Confederates of Columbus; and Island No. 10 and New Madrid were also lost to them. An attempt by the Confederates to assume the offensive resulted in their defeat at Shiloh, and Corinth was evacuated on May 30th of that year. The evacuation of Fort Pillow

soon followed, and in a fierce battle just above Memphis the Confederate river fleet was annihilated ; of eight vessels which took part in the battle three were destroyed and four taken by the Federals. The city of Memphis immediately surrendered to the successful naval commander who left that place at the end of June and proceeded downstream towards Vicksburg. A few miles above the latter city he joined hands with Admiral Farragut's fleet from New Orleans. The entire river from Cairo to the Gulf of Mexico had now been navigated by Union vessels ; but another year and many weary efforts were required before the Mississippi was definitely secure for the Federals.

Farragut had forced the passage of the forts guarding the approach to New Orleans on the 24th April, and a week later that city was formally occupied by Union forces. Twice the Northern admiral proceeded up river as far as Vicksburg and beyond it, on each occasion bringing troops with him. But though he satisfied himself that he could run past the Vicksburg batteries whenever he chose, Farragut felt bound to place on record his opinion that it was not possible to take Vicksburg without an army of 12,000 to 15,000 men, a number far in excess of the troops which he had brought with him on either occasion. On the 29th July he returned, therefore, to New Orleans, after an ineffectual bombardment of Vicksburg, and after this failure of the North to make any serious impression upon the place the Confederates were left in possession of the three-hundred-mile strip of the Mississippi from Helena to Baton Rouge. Rebel batteries were established commanding the river at Port Hudson, Natchez, Grand Gulf and Vicksburg ; and a fort was also erected a short distance up the



Arkansas River from the cover of which Confederate gunboats could dash out against unarmed Federal craft. The Confederacy thus gained another year's lease of life upon the Mississippi.

But during that year the military insight, iron nerve and dogged determination of a Northern general was to solve the problem which had so far baffled the naval and military councils of the North. The northern section of the river which had been wrested from the rebels had come into the possession of the Union through the operations of General Grant, and it was he who was destined, after repeated failure, to achieve the success upon the Mississippi which was to prove the turning-point of the war. Ulysses Simpson Grant was born in 1822 in the State of Ohio of old American stock, his grandfather having fought in the War of Independence. In 1843 he graduated at West Point, and joined the 4th Infantry Regiment with which he served with distinction in the Mexican War. In 1848 he married, and after a tour of duty in California left the army as a captain in 1854, his retirement being in part due to indulgence in liquor which brought him into trouble with his commanding officer, a martinet of the severest type. In civil life and business Grant was not a success—it has with truth been said of him that although he detested war he never succeeded in anything else—and his father took him back into his tannery business at Galena, Illinois, where he was living when the war broke out. At President Lincoln's first call for troops Grant assisted in drilling a company at his home, and for some weeks officiated in a minor staff appointment at Springfield. In a letter to the Adjutant-General of the Army at Washington he applied for service, stating that he felt himself competent to command a regiment; but,

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receiving no reply, accepted from the governor the command of the 21st Illinois Regiment of three-year volunteers, and having immediately performed active duties at several points in Missouri was soon promoted to the rank of Brigadier-General. At the time of the opening of the Vicksburg campaign Grant had become a Major-General.

Towards the end of October, 1862, Grant felt that the time had come for him to make an attempt to gain possession of Vicksburg. His headquarters at the time were at Jackson,<sup>1</sup> in Tennessee, and he had under his orders a force of some 48,000 men disposed on the line Memphis-Bolivar-Corinth, and with his base of supplies far up the Mississippi at Columbus. Considerable reinforcements were on their way, and Grant accordingly wrote to the Union commander-in-chief proposing to destroy all the railroads round Corinth, and then, after a concentration of all his forces at Grand Junction, to move upon Vicksburg by the Mississippi Central Railroad. His proposal to take that city in reverse was the logical sequence of his operations so far in freeing the upper reaches of the Mississippi. Without approaching that river, but simply by a victorious advance down a line parallel to it, he had turned one stronghold after another, and had effectually secured the river all the way from Cairo to Vicksburg (exclusive), although later the Confederates had extended their hold up to Helena. Apart from this it was highly advisable to operate against Vicksburg from the east, for on its northern side it was almost inaccessible to an army approaching from the river. Above the city the hilly range of bluffs on which it stands swerves north-eastwards

<sup>1</sup> Not to be confused with Jackson, Mississippi, which will be frequently mentioned later.

away from the Mississippi, forming a series of dominating positions, of which the most formidable was Haines' Bluff which commands all the river approaches. Without the capture of this bluff an army landing immediately north of Vicksburg might be destroyed by artillery fire.

Puzzled and delayed by incomprehensible telegrams from Washington, Grant was not able to start until the 24th November, 1862. As the Union army advanced the Confederates fell back until they turned and stood at bay at the town of Grenada. Grant, with his forces united, advanced as far as Oxford, about forty miles north of where the Confederates were making their stand. Meanwhile the line of communications of the Federal force was becoming dangerously extended, for when Grant reached Oxford on the 5th December his permanent base was at Columbus, 180 miles distant, with an intermediate base at Holly Springs. It was impossible to guard so long a line, and a change of plan was essential. In conference with his subordinate, Sherman, two plans were thoroughly discussed. One alternative was to shift the base forward from Columbus to Memphis and to resume the advance by the Memphis-Grenada-Jackson railroad; the other was to divide the army, to send Sherman back to Memphis and then down the river to effect a landing north of Vicksburg, while Grant should manœuvre so as to pin the Confederates, who were in front of him, to their ground. The division of force would grant the enemy the power of operating on interior as opposed to exterior lines, but, on the other hand, a united advance based on Memphis would require time to repair the railway between that city and Grenada. Grant was extremely loth to afford the Confederates time in which they could receive reinforcements and

increase the strength of Vicksburg, and the second alternative was, therefore, chosen. Sherman accordingly returned to Memphis, where he organized his expedition and started down the river on the 20th December, under convoy of Federal gunboats.

For the success of such a delicate combined operation three things were essential. Grant must be able to maintain a steady pressure on the Confederates opposite him ; he must be in constant communication with Sherman ; and Sherman's diversion must come as a complete surprise upon the enemy. As a matter of fact none of these essentials was fulfilled. Two cavalry raids were made by the Confederates against Grant's communications, and his advanced base at Holly Springs was totally destroyed as was also the railroad in rear. This was a serious state of affairs, and the inhabitants of the district were exultant over the difficult situation in which the hated Yankees were now placed. Some women of the neighbourhood openly jeered at Grant, asking him derisively how he proposed to feed his troops, and were much disconcerted to hear that he proposed to search their barns and houses for the necessary food. So far in the contest it had been generally understood that the property of non-combatants was sacrosanct, but Grant proposed to place the safety of his army higher than a meticulous observation of the customs of war. He, therefore, lived on the country, stripping it for fifteen miles on either side in his retirement, and the experiment was conspicuously successful. Years later Grant was wont to regret that he had not pushed on trusting to the resources of the country to make up for the loss of his line of supplies, and it is certain that the ease with which he survived the destruction of his advanced base at Holly Springs made a profound impression on

him. It suggested to him that policy of dispensing with a base and line of communications which he was later to exploit with such striking success.

More serious than the question of supplies was the fact that the telegraph had been cut, and Grant was unable to notify Sherman of his own retirement. There was just a faint chance that Sherman's movement might catch the Confederates napping, but in this Grant was doomed to disappointment. The Confederates were well served with spies, they hurried troops from Grenada, and Sherman after a spirited attempt near Haines' Bluff was repulsed with smart loss. With 32,000 men and 60 guns he had steamed down to the mouth of the Yazoo and proceeded thirteen miles up that river, eventually throwing his troops ashore on the low flats facing the range of bluffs just north of Vicksburg. But in the difficult and swampy ground Sherman could effect nothing against the bluffs held by 12,000 of the enemy, and convinced of the hopelessness of the attempt he re-embarked his force, having had nearly two thousand killed and wounded against a loss on the Confederate side of less than a tenth of that number. Grant's first attempt against Vicksburg had ended in complete failure, although there was a slight compensation in the capture of Arkansas Post on the Arkansas River. This expedition was suggested by Sherman to McClernand, who had come down to relieve him, and was successfully carried out by the troops which had been forced to retire from Haines' Bluff.

The news of Grant's ill-success came as an added blow to the Union's prospects which, at the end of the year 1862, were everywhere gloomy. In the East the Army of the Potomac had received a stunning blow at Fredericksburg and was helpless for the time being;



and to this was now added the unwelcome intelligence that Grant was helpless, his troops dispersed and his communications destroyed. The elections of 1862 had gone against the policy of continuing the war ; voluntary enlistment had dried up ; and it seemed as if the fiery enthusiasm of the North had burnt itself out. Grant, however, was the last man to be dismayed by difficulties or failure. Never for a moment did he waver in his determination to take Vicksburg, and he clearly realized that the circumstances of the hour called for a forward policy and a decisive campaign. He now withdrew the bulk of his forces from Northern Mississippi and concentrated them on the west bank of the river at Young's Point and to the north of it, almost facing the Confederate fortress. Grant was now in sole command of the forces operating down the river which formed the Army of the Tennessee, and consisted of the XIIIth Corps under McClelland, the XVth under Sherman, the XVIth under Hurlbut (left behind at Memphis), and the XVIIth under McPherson. The difficulties and worries of the situation were aggravated by the first-named general who was carrying on a discreditable intrigue against Grant. McClelland was not a regular soldier, but he had shown distinct military skill and high courage, qualities which unfortunately were offset by a selfish and overweening estimate of his abilities and by an unscrupulous attempt to use political influence to secure for himself supreme command on the Mississippi.

The fact that the bulk of Grant's army was now close to and in front of Vicksburg brought the reduction of that place no nearer. Vicksburg could only be attacked with any real prospect of success from the rear, that is from the east, for it was by nature almost impregnable from any other quarter. For hundreds

of miles the eastern edge of the Mississippi valley is fringed by bluffs which form the escarpment of the lofty plains of Mississippi and Tennessee, and here and there—though at long intervals—the river sweeps close up to the bluffs and washes their base for several miles. These points formed admirable sites for Confederate batteries and had been thus used to defend the river, and of them Vicksburg was by far the strongest. The bluff upon which it stood rises two hundred feet above the water and, for miles below the city, cliffs tower almost sheer from the Mississippi. From its front, therefore, the city was unapproachable owing to the heights which look upon the river. Its right was guarded by Haines' Bluff, whose strength Sherman had recently had cause to remember. On the left, although the river in its tortuous course swings away after some miles from the line of bluffs, it strikes them again at Grand Gulf, twenty-five miles from the city as the crow flies, and that place formed a most serviceable outwork. The Confederates had during 1862 devoted considerable attention to giving additional strength to the protection so lavishly supplied by Nature, and not without cause had Vicksburg come to be known as the Queen City of the Bluff and the Gibraltar of the West.

Although rebel control of the Mississippi had been sensibly curtailed, nevertheless the opening of 1863 saw the section of the river from Port Hudson to Vicksburg, including both those places, in Confederate hands. The possession by the Confederates of this stretch of river, sealed by a strongly fortified position at either end, was bound profoundly to affect Grant's plans. It might now be assumed that Vicksburg was vulnerable only from the rear; and experience had seemed to establish the fact that the rear of the

fortress could be reached only by a landing well south of it. It was not that this landing was the serious problem ; for the debarkation of troops in calm water is a comparatively short operation, and might in this case be accomplished by surprise, or by misleading the enemy by feints in another quarter. The real difficulty would be the feeding and supply of the troops if and when a footing on the east bank had been secured. So long as the normal system of drawing supplies from a base should be employed such base must be either Memphis up river or New Orleans at the mouth. But in the former case supply ships coming downstream would have to pass the batteries of Vicksburg, while in the latter case Port Hudson would block the way to ships coming up the river from New Orleans.

Grant was a commander who could keep his own counsel ; but although he gave no hint of his real intentions it is possible from the course of subsequent events to infer what was passing in his mind in those early months of 1863 at Milliken's Bend. He had not forgotten the lesson he had learnt after the destruction of his advanced base at Holly Springs—the possibility of living on the enemy's country if required ; and it seems that months before the matter was to be put to the test he had definitely made up his mind on the following lines. He would, with the aid of the navy, throw his army over the Mississippi well south of Vicksburg ; he would do everything possible to ensure a safe line of communications with Memphis ; but should this line prove unworkable he would, certainly—and even should it succeed he might, possibly—throw base and communications to the winds and make his army pick up its food from the country as it went along. Grant did not underrate the importance of a



line of communications, but he would make it his servant not his master. He would use its services so long as it gave satisfaction, but would dismiss it the moment it interfered with his plans.

For the moment Grant busied himself with experiments to provide a means by which supply ships coming downstream could pass Vicksburg in safety. His first experiment was an attempt to dig a canal across the peninsula which is formed by a great loop made by the river opposite Vicksburg. The idea of such a cut was no new one, for a few years earlier in a quarrel over a question of boundary the State of Louisiana had begun the execution of a project to leave the city of Vicksburg high and dry by cutting a canal across this tongue of land, and thus changing the course of the Mississippi. And during the preceding summer, when Farragut was endeavouring to reduce Vicksburg, Williams, who accompanied him with some three thousand men, took up the uncompleted project with the object of forming a cut by which Farragut might, if necessary, move his fleet out of range of the Confederate batteries. Now that Grant had large numbers at his disposal four thousand men were set to make a third attempt to finish this military cut-off, and after six tedious weeks of toil with men and dredgers success seemed near at hand. The progress of the work on "Grant's big ditch" had been followed with intense interest both by the North and the South, and even in Europe news of the success or failure of the effort was awaited with curiosity. But on the 8th March a sudden rise in the waters of the Mississippi burst open the dam at the upper end, wrecking the unfinished canal and submerging the low-lying ground of the peninsula. The damage done was irreparable, and in the flood tents, tools and equip-

ment were submerged, horses were drowned, and hundreds of men had to flee for their lives to the levée, or embankment, which fringed the tongue of land on which they were working. Although the disappointment in the North was great it is probable that the canal, if completed, would have been of little use, for the Confederates had been erecting batteries which would have kept the southern exit under fire.

Simultaneously with the canal project a more ambitious attempt was made towards rendering the passage of supply vessels from the Upper Mississippi immune from Vicksburg. About seventy miles above the city and on the other side of the river was a crescent-shaped sheet of water, Lake Providence by name, a remnant of the old deserted bed of the Mississippi. This lake was connected by a series of swamps with Bayou Macon, which, uniting with other rivers flowing parallel to the Mississippi, eventually joined the Red River, the mouth of which was within striking distance of Port Hudson. This tortuous system of water was navigable throughout and it remained only to create a channel between Lake Providence and Bayou Macon. McPherson's corps was set to work, but the difficulties of uprooting and removing the trees which had grown over the swamp were immense, and during March the scheme was definitely rejected. Grant himself had not been particularly sanguine as to the chances of success either of the canal or of this deviation, and his object in employing his troops upon the two schemes had been to keep them employed and fit until conditions should be more favourable for the attempt against Vicksburg.

While these experiments were being tried Grant was also occupied with a combined naval and military expedition in what was known as the Yazoo Valley,

the initial objective of which was to destroy the last remnant of the Confederate river fleet. That valley is a great area, oval in form, three hundred miles long and some sixty miles broad, extending from just below Memphis to Vicksburg, where the hills which form its eastern boundary again reach the Mississippi. Military operations in the valley would be attended with great difficulty, for the land is alluvial, and, where it is not protected by levées, is liable to inundation in ordinary rises of the waters of the Mississippi. Further, the valley is intercepted by numerous bayous and receives many streams from the hills, all of which from the conformation of the ground find their way first into the Yazoo and by it to the Mississippi. These bayous and streams, diverging at times and reuniting again, form a most intricate system of watercourses extremely baffling except to those with considerable local knowledge. The land and the banks of the streams were as a rule thickly covered with timber, but there were also large portions of the valley under cultivation, and the abundance of grain and live-stock made the valley a valuable granary for the Confederates in and round Vicksburg. Most of the streams were navigable and carried on their waters many steamers of light draft, the numbers of which had been increased by those craft which had escaped from New Orleans when that city fell. And at Yazoo City the Confederates had established a navy yard, where at least three powerful riverine war vessels had been constructed.

Admiral Porter, who commanded the Federal flotilla above Vicksburg, had suggested to Grant the advisability of sending a force to deal with this inland naval base, and Grant had agreed. As the valley was unsuited for purely military operations the advance would have to be made by water, and the problem

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was how to get into the valley without having to pass Haines' Bluff. The solution was comparatively simple, for opposite Helena was a large bayou called Yazoo Pass, leading from the Mississippi to the upper waters of the Yazoo River, by which access was formerly gained to Yazoo City. Some years before the war the pass had been closed by a levée or embankment, eighteen feet high and one hundred feet thick, but its destruction by explosives presented no difficulties. Accordingly on February 2nd a mine was exploded, and the waters of the Mississippi rushed in and rendered the disused pass once more navigable. A pioneer force was then sent through to make a reconnaissance and enormous difficulties were at once encountered. The inrush of water from the Mississippi had not only filled the bayou but had flooded the country for miles round so that the original channel was difficult to locate. Further, the bayou wound its way through dense forest, and in some places the river steamers had to pass through regular tunnels formed by the arching branches overhead. The Confederates, too, had received information of the Federal attempt and proceeded to add to the difficulties of the exploring party by the creation of barriers of felled trees. Much of the timber in the valley was hard wood of greater specific gravity than water, and the task of removing these trunks often weighing thirty tons from the bottom of the channel was a severe strain on the pioneer party. In one place a barricade over a mile long had been formed, and great delay was caused first in cutting the thick and tangled branches and then removing the sunken trunks. But after herculean efforts these obstacles were overcome and the reconnoitring expedition emerged upon the waters of the Coldwater.

Grant had meanwhile detailed a force of 4,500 men, under General Ross, to follow the pioneers, and this force was escorted by a flotilla of six light-draught steamers, a couple of rams and two river ironclads. Of the latter the larger was the *Chillicothe*, a side-wheeled flat-bottomed craft of 300 tons fitted with a large casement in which were three 11-inch guns. The scope of the expedition had now been considerably extended, for the objective was no longer merely the destruction of the Confederate naval base but an attempt to take Vicksburg in reverse by outflanking the dreaded Haines' Bluff. A division from the XVIIth Corps was therefore sent in support of Ross, and the remainder of the corps was to be prepared to follow so soon as sufficient river steamers had been collected. The further advance of the Northerners had taken the Confederates by surprise, but they lost no time in taking steps to cope with it when it was realized that the Federals meant business. Where the Yallabushsha joins the Yazoo the latter river takes a sharp bend which encloses a small peninsula, and on this the Confederates had thrown up a breastwork of earth and cotton bales, armed with a few guns of which the heaviest was a rifled piece of 6½-inch calibre. This work, called Fort Pemberton from the name of the commander in Vicksburg, completely checked the Federal advance, and although for three days the ironclads attacked the fort from eight hundred yards range they received severe damage in the attempt, and owing to the flooded nature of the country the troops were able to render practically no assistance. In the circumstances there was nothing to be done but to order a retirement. General Quimby, who was met coming up with reinforcements, decided to make another attempt, but this had to



be abandoned in compliance with a direct order from Grant who had been unable to collect sufficient steamers. An attempt was then made to call in the forces of Nature where arms had failed. So low was the command of the Confederate work that it was calculated that a rise of two feet in the level of the river would render it untenable. A levée on the Mississippi three hundred miles away was accordingly cut, but the hoped-for result was not obtained, and another failure had to be written down in the list of attempts to take Vicksburg.

Grant had, meanwhile, been receiving information as to movements of the Confederates which showed that Ross might be surrounded by superior forces and his whole force captured. It became necessary, therefore, to take prompt measures to relieve him. The route proposed was up the Yazoo River to Steele's Bayou, and thence by an intricate series of waterways to a comparatively large stream called the Sunflower. A voyage about fifty miles down that stream would then bring a relieving force into the Yazoo River about midway between Yazoo City and Haines' Bluff, and this threat to the Confederates would probably have the effect of taking any pressure off Ross. On the 16th March Sherman took one of his divisions up Steele's Bayou in small steamers preceded by Admiral Porter with five ironclads and four smaller vessels. Then ensued a series of incidents which must have seemed a nightmare to the naval officers concerned; for, short of actually navigating dry land, the vessels were called upon to play the most extraordinary rôles. In some of the cross-creeks the bends were so numerous and sharp that the ships had to be man-handled round them, and there were the usual obstructions caused by thick foliage overhead and sunken tree trunks below.

Sometimes a smoke stack or a pilot house was damaged by the former, and in places the channel was so thickly overgrown with willows that the ironclads seemed to be steaming through a copse rather than on a waterway.

In his subsequent report on the operation Admiral Porter, referring to his ironclads, remarked that he never met with vessels so admirably adapted for knocking down trees, hauling them up by the roots, or demolishing bridges. Among many curious incidents was a race between a Union tug and a body of Confederate cavalry, the former making for a stretch of water which the horsemen wished to deny it. The tug was hampered by bends and the cavalry were helped by their local knowledge and skill in point-to-point riding, with the result that the horsemen won the contest, and the tug on arriving found negroes frantically hurling trees into the water, under the bayonets of the cavalry. On the 19th March Porter had got some thirty miles ahead of the soldiers and was within a few hundred yards of clear navigation, but he was now attacked in force and his situation became extremely perilous. Some reinforcements were hurried up, and the main body followed at night in barges towed by a tug which crashed through the trees in thick darkness regardless of damage even when the smoke stack and wheel house were carried away. The reinforcements were disembarked in a cane brake and led forward by Sherman himself, the column carrying lighted candles to find the way. In the morning it was found that the Confederates had blocked the entrance to the Rolling Fork from which they could not be dislodged, and it was, therefore, necessary for the Union forces to retreat. There was, however, no room for the iron-

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clads to turn, and there was nothing for it but to unship rudders and to back down, bumping from tree to tree, and rebounding through the bends. Thirty miles was traversed in this way, the "day's run" being never more than ten miles. Finally, on the 27th the Mississippi was reached and Sherman's troops regained their camp opposite Vicksburg.

This succession of failures was a source of keen disappointment to the North, and the ill-success, coupled with adverse conditions of weather—the winter was abnormally wet—and the sickness among the troops lowered the *moral* of Grant's army. The grumbling of his soldiers was repeated and exaggerated in the North where the people were becoming impatient for a Union victory, and it seemed as if Grant must be written down amongst the mediocre generals who had so far been entrusted with high commands. Round Lincoln there were many to decry the failure of the commander of the Army of the Tennessee; but to his eternal credit the President recognized that in Grant there was something that other generals lacked and, to complaints against him, replied, "I rather like the man; I think we'll try him a little longer." The Press now began to print ominous paragraphs to the effect that Grant had taken to drink once again, a statement which more than one correspondent subsequently admitted was inserted not from motives of veracity but as "good copy." Even Lincoln was half inclined to believe the rumour, though he had once disposed of it by saying (adapting a saying of George II about Wolfe), "that he wished he knew where Grant got his whisky so that he might send barrels of it to some of the other generals."



Grant was fully aware of the campaign of falsehood and slander directed against him, but he took no steps to meet it. In his memoirs he has confessed that practically his sole superstition was that a man should take no notice of unfair attacks, but should confine himself strictly to carrying out what he conceived to be his duty. His duty was to take Vicksburg, and if one plan failed another must be tried. As he looked across the Mississippi in those last days of March, 1863, and gazed at the "Gibraltar of the West," it seemed that there were still in theory three possible solutions of the problem. In the first place he might cross the river where he was and attack the place blindly in front, but though this was theoretically possible the odds against it were so enormous that it must be dismissed. In the second place he might ship his whole force back to Memphis and, basing himself upon that city, recommence a campaign along the Mississippi Central Railroad. From a military point of view that would be a thoroughly sound course, and it was warmly advocated by Sherman who submitted to his chief a memorandum respectfully urging its adoption. But Grant felt that in the existing political situation anything in the nature of a retrograde movement was strongly to be deprecated, and he therefore favoured a solution more daring in nature. That was to move his army, in co-operation with the navy, to a point of the river below Vicksburg, ferry it across and gain a footing on the east bank, and having done so to operate against Vicksburg from the rear. As for a line of communications Grant would try to link up the bayous on the west bank of the Mississippi so that supply vessels coming downstream could avoid Vicksburg; but, as has been said, he probably by this time contemplated doing

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without a base and communications altogether, for a time.<sup>1</sup>

Having concentrated his army at Milliken's Bend, Grant, on March 29th, ordered McClelland to lead the way to New Carthage, twenty-seven miles lower down the river. As for supplies it was proposed to open up a series of bayous by letting in water from the Mississippi, but once again the weather went against Grant. The heavy rains of the winter had been succeeded by the dry weather of spring with the result that the bayous shrank in size, and a sudden fall in the level of the Mississippi towards the end of April rendered the route temporarily useless. Still, if the bayous were rendered useless the same cause gradually afforded ground on which corduroy roads could be built, fit for the passage of men and waggon. On April 6th the leading division of McClelland's corps reached New Carthage, having skirmished with some Confederate cavalry and infantry sent across from the east bank, and a fortnight later the whole corps was concentrated at its destination.

<sup>1</sup> Grant in his memoirs states that his intention was to seize Grand Gulf and then to detach a corps to co-operate with a force, acting under General Banks, in the reduction of Port Hudson, before attempting operations against Vicksburg. Greene, however, a recognized authority on the Vicksburg campaign, distinctly states that the intention to co-operate with Banks was a modification imposed upon Grant by the Union commander-in-chief. His words are, "It is only necessary to say here that when Grant determined on March 29th to . . . turn the Confederate left flank, it was his intention to prosecute a campaign along the Big Black against Vicksburg after crossing the river. But on April 10 he received a letter from Halleck, dated April 2, calling special attention to the necessity of co-operating with Banks. . . . This letter caused a modification in Grant's plans. He still determined to cross the river at or near Grand Gulf, but once across he proposed to send an army corps down the east bank of the river to Bayou Sara, near Port Hudson, to co-operate with Banks in the reduction of that place."—F. V. Greene, *The Mississippi Campaigns of the Civil War*, page 139.

Meanwhile Porter's vessels—less eight gunboats—had successfully passed the batteries of Vicksburg during the night of the 16th. At ten o'clock that night the fleet cast loose from its moorings at the mouth of the Yazoo River and steamed slowly down the Mississippi. Grant had seized the occasion to risk the passage of rations and supplies, and the fleet was accompanied by three transports carrying these stores, while each warship had a coal barge made fast to the starboard side. A few minutes after eleven o'clock Porter's flagship rounded the point of Vicksburg and immediately pandemonium broke loose from the heights. The Confederates set fire to buildings on their side of the river, and also sent men across in small boats to the western bank for the same purpose, so that the Union ships were visible as if in broad daylight. As each vessel passed the town it poured broadsides into it, and after three hours of exposure to the enemy fire the fleet arrived and anchored off New Carthage. There it was found that although every vessel had been struck several times the only loss was one transport and two of the coal barges. Ten days later five more transports, out of six to make the attempt, successfully passed the Vicksburg batteries.

Porter's success in running the gauntlet of the Confederate batteries was a great asset for Grant, for apart from the conveyance of supplies, the assistance which the warships could render in helping the army to gain a footing on the east bank would be very great. Grant indeed, though hundreds of miles from the sea, was now enjoying the advantages of maritime command, for he could select his point of landing on what was the enemy's "coast-line" and he could also make provision for a secondary debarkation which would mystify the enemy as to his real intentions. With

this object one division of Sherman's corps had been sent from Milliken's Bend up river some hundred and fifty miles to Greenville, where it was to debark and, by marching along Deer Creek as far down as Rolling Fork, was to distract the attention of the enemy from the main movement under Grant. Nor did Grant neglect to make attempts to mislead his opponent by the use of purely land forces. On April 17th a force of three cavalry regiments, under Colonel Grierson, left La Grange and moved due south with orders to do the maximum of damage and to confuse and distract the enemy as much as possible. Both schemes were eminently successful. Pemberton's command was a large one, and being weak in cavalry he was peculiarly liable to be misled by an energetic diversion. Grierson's raid turned out to be one of the most brilliant operations of its kind in the whole war; the force rode right through the State of Mississippi, effectually cutting three different lines of railroad, destroying sixty miles of telegraph, isolating the city of Jackson and bewildering Pemberton at a critical moment. The movement of the division of Sherman's army was so successful as to convince Pemberton for the moment that the real danger was on his right, a feeling fostered, as will be seen later, by a vigorous demonstration by Sherman himself against Haine's Bluff.

To return now to Grant; on the 23rd he proceeded in person to New Carthage only to find that the vagaries of the river had turned the place into an island and that it was quite unsuitable as a place of concentration for his army. The discovery of a passable road now led him to send McClelland's corps further down the river to Perkin's Plantation, but, after a reconnaissance of the defences of Grand Gulf, Grant and Porter agreed that to attempt to reduce

the place from Perkin's Plantation, which was over twenty miles from Grand Gulf, would be inadvisable. It was, therefore, necessary to move the army still further downstream, and on the 29th the whole of McClernand's corps and two divisions of McPherson's were concentrated at Hard Times.

Everything being now ready for the passage of the river an attack was made by the fleet on the batteries of Grand Gulf. But although they were briskly bombarded for more than five hours they were too high to be seriously damaged, and it was decided once more to move the army down river in search of a more suitable crossing-place. A negro having brought word that there was a good road on the opposite bank from Bruinsburg to the high ground inland, that point was selected as the place of landing and De Shroon's as the point of embarkation. By dawn on the 30th April McClernand's corps was being ferried over ; by noon all of his 18,000 men were on the eastern bank ; and by sunset they had occupied without resistance the summit of the bluffs which at this point are some three miles inland. The attention of Pemberton had throughout the day been riveted on his right where Sherman, assisted by the eight gunboats left above Vicksburg, had moved his forces up the Yazoo and landed as if with the intention of attacking Haines' Bluff.

McClernand pushed on after nightfall, but when his advanced-guard came under a desultory fire about one o'clock in the morning the order was given to his corps to lie down under arms and wait for daybreak ; and when dawn broke the Confederates were discovered posted across the junction of roads about three miles west of Port Gibson. Their force consisted of some 8,000 men drawn from Grand Gulf and Vicksburg.



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Grant, however, had the whole of McClelland's corps, and during the night two divisions of McPherson's corps had been crossing the river, so that the Federals enjoyed a marked numerical superiority. The country round Port Gibson consists of a number of steep ridges, the intervening hollows being filled with thicket and cane brake, and as the roads ran along the tops of the ridges they were unfavourable for the advancing Union troops. Thus in the battle which began at 5.30 a.m. the Confederate force, aided by the ground, was able to put up a stout resistance in spite of the great array of strength against it. The fight lasted throughout the day, but in the end numbers told; the Confederate right was turned; and about 5 p.m. the whole line of the defenders was in full retreat with a loss of 1,000 killed and wounded and 650 captured, the total Union casualties being less than nine hundred. The following morning the Federals entered Port Gibson, and immediately set about constructing a bridge over the south fork of the Bayou Pierre to replace one destroyed by the enemy in their retreat.

That evening the Confederates evacuated Grand Gulf in haste, and on the morning of May 3rd it was occupied by a landing party from Porter's fleet. Late in the afternoon Grant rode into the place to make arrangements for its conversion into a base for supplies, and while engaged on this work a letter was brought to him which was to influence the whole campaign on which he had now embarked.

The despatch, which was from Banks, was dated April 10th from the interior of Louisiana, and was to the effect that he would reach Baton Rouge, whence he would start for Port Hudson, thirty miles to the north, on May 10th and that his field force

amounted to 15,000 men. Whatever may have been Grant's real intention when he began to move his army south from Milliken's Bend—and it seems clear that he had then no idea whatever of sending a force to co-operate with Banks; but that he intended to push inland so soon as he had got a footing across the river, with the intention of acting rapidly against the rear of Vicksburg, even at the cost of abandoning base and communications<sup>1</sup>—it is, at any rate, certain that when he received Banks's note on May 3rd he was committed to the execution of a definitely expressed wish of the Union commander-in-chief. That injunction was to the effect that Grant should detach a portion of his force southwards to aid Banks in the reduction of Port Hudson. Grant had interpreted this injunction as an order, and McClernand's corps had been earmarked for the mission south. But if this dispersion of Grant's force were to take place it would rule out of court the idea of the dash inland to the rear of Vicksburg. Grant's army would be too seriously reduced in strength for the operation to have a reasonable chance of success; and it would be necessary for Grant to await the return of McClernand, who, in the event of the operation against Port Hudson proving successful, would then bring back with him the whole of Banks's force, less the casualties incurred and detachments dropped as river guards on the way up.

So much is clear. But in considering the decision formed by Grant after reading Banks's letter some historians convey the impression that the contents of the letter brought to light some new and unexpected source of delay; and that it was this delay—then, for the first time, revealed—which had such an

<sup>1</sup> See footnote, page 34.

influence on Grant. Such, however, was not really the case. In his note Banks intimated that he would be ready to start operations against Port Hudson on May 10th, that is to say, exactly one week after the receipt of the note by Grant. But even if McClernand's corps were to start the next morning it would not be McClernand but Banks who would be delayed and kept waiting for the necessary co-operation to be secured. The distance from Port Gibson to Port Hudson is roughly a hundred miles in a straight line, and probably thirty per cent more by actual roads which were, it must be remembered, extremely bad. Only by some amazing feat of marching could McClernand's corps arrive at Port Hudson as soon as Banks. The message from Banks, so far as its actual contents went, could have had no influence upon Grant's intention of sending a corps south, for not even by marching his men off their legs could McClernand arrive before Banks was ready to receive him.

It was not indeed the fear lest Banks might not be ready when McClernand arrived which now weighed on Grant, but the question whether, in the circumstances, and in spite of the commander-in-chief's wishes, McClernand should be sent at all. Grant must have clearly realized that if Vicksburg were taken Port Hudson would in all probability fall automatically, and soon after the larger place. It seemed to him that the success he had achieved by gaining a footing on the east bank of the river and by pushing inland several miles was one that should be followed up at the earliest possible moment, with every available man, and even at the cost of incurring distinct risk. After months of weary efforts his men were at last on firm ground, their fighting quality was known to be high, and their *moral* had been entirely restored



by the complete change in the state of affairs. In these circumstances the soundest policy undoubtedly would be to leave Banks to look after himself and for Grant to concern himself exclusively with Vicksburg. It was now May 3rd. To send troops to co-operate against Port Hudson and to await their return would mean a delay of at least a month, in return for the chance of receiving a reinforcement of a maximum of some ten to twelve thousand men even if the operation against Port Hudson should prove successful. But during that month the Confederates in and round Vicksburg would almost certainly be strengthened by the recall of detachments and by reinforcements hurried up from further afield; and, by delaying, Grant would surrender the initiative and forfeit the great advantage which his sudden descent on the Confederate position had brought him. Delay would in these circumstances be suicidal, and Grant therefore came to the decision not to send a detachment to assist Banks at all, but to keep the whole of his army under his own hand and to use it to follow up his victory at Port Gibson at the earliest possible moment.

Such a plan might mean that Grant must measure his force against superior numbers and that his communications with Grand Gulf would be seriously threatened so soon as he pushed further inland. With his three corps his force would amount only to 45,000 men, and he estimated the strength of Pemberton's forces at 60,000 along the line Vicksburg-Jackson, exclusive of reinforcements which he had reason to believe were being hurried forward under Joseph Johnston. To counteract the enemy's superiority in force Grant's best chance was to take advantage of his opponent's dispersion and he, therefore, proposed

to interpose his army between Vicksburg and Jackson, drive off any force assembling at, or already in, the latter place, and then turning against the troops round Vicksburg either defeat them or push them back into the fortress. For such an operation it was essential that Grant should be able to use every man in the fight and that he should enjoy the maximum of mobility. Neither of these essentials would, however, be forthcoming if he were forced to detach a portion of his force to guard a base and communications as well as to improve existing and construct new roads ; and if his movements were to be hampered by the necessity of covering his communications while engaged in striking right and left with rapidity and vigour. The lesson he had learned after Holly Springs enabled Grant now to arrive at a conclusion which was the logical sequence to his decision to act at once against the rear of Vicksburg. To use his own words, " I therefore determined to move independent of Banks, *cut loose from my base*, destroy the rebel force in rear of Vicksburg, and invest or capture that city." With great prudence he refrained from revealing his new plan to Halleck at Washington and kept the commander-in-chief quiet by non-committal despatches until it would be too late for him to interfere. It was only necessary now to await the arrival of Sherman (to whom he had written to cease his demonstration against Haine's Bluff and to join him as quickly as possible) before pushing inland.

Opposed to Grant's firmness of purpose were irresolution and divided control on the Confederate side. On the 24th November, 1862, General Joseph E. Johnston had been assigned to command all the Confederate troops between the Alleghanies and the Mississippi ; and a month later the " control of all

operations in the West " was entrusted to him. His position was, however, anomalous and unsatisfactory, for of the two armies nominally under his control one—that of Bragg—was in Tennessee and the other under Pemberton stretched from Grenada to Port Hudson. From armies so separated and in one case so dispersed no co-ordinated movements were to be expected, and, realizing the futility of his position, Johnston had asked to be assigned some other duty, a request which was refused by the Confederate President.

The day following Grant's passage of the Mississippi Pemberton telegraphed the intelligence to Johnston and informed him of the battle then raging at Port Gibson. Johnston, who was at the moment with Bragg in Tennessee, wired back to Pemberton enjoining him to unite all his troops and to fall upon the Federal force. Pemberton, however, had failed to realize that Grant might cut himself off from his base, and considered that the soundest policy would be to let Grant push further inland and then to aim a blow against his communications. He accordingly occupied the line of the Big Black River covering Vicksburg on the east, with his right refused back to Warrenton, at the same time giving instructions that the reinforcements from Port Hudson and South Carolina should detrain at Jackson against which place he expected a raid. By that time, however, Grant, with the exceptional mobility which a commander tied to no base enjoys, was already marching, not with a mere raiding force, but with practically the whole of his army towards Jackson.

On the 7th May Sherman with his corps joined Grant and it was now possible to make a start. The troops were furnished with rations for five days, and in order

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to obviate any delay Grant gave strict orders that no ration indents should be used, but that Supply officers were to issue on the verbal request of a responsible officer. Foraging parties were also sent out each night to scour the country and it was found that in beef, poultry and bacon there would be little stint ; bread and coffee were, however, insufficient, and, although in the houses means were found to grind corn and bake, some of the units in rear were without bread for several days. Grant had still maintained secrecy as to his decision to cut himself off from his base, and Sherman wrote warning him that the road from Grand Gulf would be "jammed as sure as life." In reply Grant sent a nonchalant notification of his real intentions.

Sending small detachments over the Big Black River to demonstrate towards Vicksburg, Grant now moved forward on a broad front. The right wing under McPherson took the road to Jackson via Raymond. The centre under Sherman headed for Bolton ; and the left under McClernand moved towards Edward's station on the Vicksburg-Jackson railroad and halfway between the two cities. On the 12th McPherson's advanced-guard collided with a force of Confederates holding a strong position at Raymond, and a brisk fight ensued. The Confederates numbered some five thousand, and when the bulk of McPherson's force came up the defenders, seeing themselves outnumbered, broke off the fight and retired hastily on Jackson. McPherson encamped that night at Raymond.

On the 13th Johnston arrived at Jackson to find that there were no more than 6,000 men immediately available for the defence of the place and that a Union force was between himself and Pemberton. He sent a telegram to Washington advising the authorities

not to expect favourable news, and warning them that he had arrived too late to effect anything decisive. During the night, however, he communicated with Pemberton directing him to co-operate with the force in Jackson by an attack against Grant's rear at Clinton. Pemberton, who had all along failed to realize that the only way to save Vicksburg was to defeat the Union army threatening it, was obsessed by the importance of the fortress as a storehouse of valuable war material and considered it his duty to glue himself to the city. Eventually he decided to play an active part, but it was to make a raid against the communications of Grant which had no existence.

There was no such hesitation and delay on the Union side, and the next four days form a brilliant vindication of the tactical maxim to hit hard, hit often, and keep on hitting. Grant had learned that reinforcements were expected at Jackson, and he decided to leave Pemberton alone for the moment and to strike hard towards the east. Accordingly he turned McClernand and Sherman towards Clinton to support McPherson in his advance upon Jackson. The battle for that town began about 10 a.m. on the 14th, and by the afternoon the Confederate force had been overwhelmed and the place was in Federal hands, Johnston being forced to retire almost due north to Canton. At the same time Pemberton was feeling his way towards Raymond, still searching for the communications of Grant, so that the two separate portions of the Confederate army were thus moving away from each other leaving a compact and highly mobile Union force between them.

Having seized Jackson, Grant now lost no time in turning sharp about to deal with Pemberton, and

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leaving Sherman to destroy the arsenal, stores and railways, he promptly headed west. Pemberton now received peremptory instructions from Johnston at Canton to march to Clinton and join him there, in accordance with which the former abandoned his futile attempt against Grant's communications and slowly retraced his steps. But it was now too late, for the two armies had already become engaged, and as Grant hastened to the front he sent at the same time orders to Sherman to rejoin him without delay. Pemberton with 18,000 men had taken up a position at Champion's Hill, and here upon the 16th took place the severest and most important battle of the Vicksburg campaign. The result, however, was a complete victory for the Federals. Of the three Confederate divisions that on the left broke and gave way while the division on the right was driven south and lost to Pemberton, although by a long detour it managed to reach Johnston near Canton in a pitiable condition. The Confederates had nearly 4,000 casualties of which more than half were prisoners, while the losses on the Federal side were under 2,500. Twenty-four pieces of the Confederate artillery fell into the victor's hands.

That evening Grant received a despatch from Washington from the commander-in-chief which he was able to regard with equanimity. It was to the effect that he was to march south and unite with Banks before attempting a campaign against Vicksburg. But between Grant's victorious army and Vicksburg there was now but one obstacle to be crossed—the Big Black River where Pemberton had constructed a bridge-head and where he made a last stand before being driven into the fortress. It had been intended that one division should occupy the



works on the east side of the river, supported by another division behind it. But the supporting division had disappeared and the other thus found itself committed to the occupation of entrenchments on open ground nearly a mile from the river ; without support and against the greatly superior numbers of the Federals it could make no real resistance. After less than an hour's fighting one-third of the Confederate force had been captured, eighteen pieces of artillery were taken, and the remainder fled in panic, setting fire, however, to the bridge as they retired. The Federals were delayed for a day constructing a new bridge, but on the 18th McClernand and McPherson marched straight towards Vicksburg, while Sherman moved north-westerly and occupied the Benton road about half-way between Vicksburg and Haines' Bluff. That stronghold had now become untenable and was found to be evacuated, the Confederates in their haste having left fourteen heavy siege guns undamaged behind them.

It was now just eighteen days since Grant had crossed the Mississippi, and in that time he had marched two hundred miles, had won five battles, had taken nearly one hundred guns, and had destroyed or captured more than twelve thousand of the enemy. His army was now at length face to face with the fortress which had been inaccessible for weary months, and, after living for eleven days upon the country, Grant had now regained touch with the Mississippi as a base from which he could draw supplies and reinforcements at will.

When Johnston heard of the defeat of the Confederates at Champion's Hill he sent word to Pemberton during the night of May 17th to abandon Vicksburg and to march north-eastwards to join hands with him

without delay ; but Pemberton was still governed by the determination to hold the fortress entrusted to him till the last. His position was tactically a strong one, for on the land side Vicksburg was defended by 128 guns, and the stiff clay soil which rendered revetting unnecessary was favourable for the construction of entrenchments. Further, the ground was very broken and cut up by deep ravines which would hamper an attack upon the place, while the approaches to the crest of the main ridge were few and difficult and commanded by strong and well-sited works. Grant, however, did not at first contemplate a regular siege, for the obvious demoralization of the Confederates led him to believe that the fortress could be carried by a *coup de main*. Accordingly on the 19th an attempt was made to storm the works, but the Confederates had to a great extent recovered their *moral* and fought tenaciously behind their entrenchments so that the attack resulted in failure, much to the disappointment of Grant. Time was precious, for it was known that reinforcements were on their way to Johnston, and it was thought probable that a relieving army might soon appear. Consequently a renewed attempt was made by the Federals on the 22nd all along the line. Under a murderous fire the Union troops dashed forward and in several places planted the Stars and Stripes on the rebel works, but these were not carried although the flags waved for several hours upon the parapet. Grant was about to give orders to abandon the attack when a misleading report from McClernand reached him to the effect that he was partly in possession of two forts and that a combined forward movement would decide the day. Grant's terse comment when the pencilled note was brought to him was, " I don't believe a word of it,"



but he allowed himself to be persuaded by Sherman to risk another assault with fresh troops, which, however, was a repetition of the first—equally unsuccessful and bloody. In these two attempts the Union army had lost over four thousand men, and it was now clear that siege operations would have to be adopted. The failure was, however, to some extent compensated for by the opportunity it gave Grant for dismissing McClernand. That general was foolish and insubordinate enough to send an account of the assault to the Press, extolling his own corps and making insinuations against other troops and their commanders. This was too much even for the long-suffering Grant, who sent the intriguing politician to the right-about to his home in Illinois.

A siege having been decided upon it was essential to take measures for dealing with the possible arrival of Johnston. By the beginning of June that commander had organized an army of 30,000 men in the neighbourhood of Canton and was being continuously urged by the Confederate authorities to make every effort to relieve Pemberton. Grant, however, was now receiving large reinforcements which brought his army round Vicksburg up to 70,000 men, and in these circumstances the cautious Johnston refrained from making his presence really felt until it was too late. Pemberton was, therefore, left to his own resources, and the fall of Vicksburg was now merely a matter of time. Little fighting took place, though the usual sapping, mining and counter-mining went on and the city was shelled both by the Union troops and by the mortars of the river fleet. Soon Pemberton's position became desperate and then absolutely hopeless. Food grew scarcer and scarcer, and a deterioration of *moral* amongst his troops was clearly evident. On the 3rd

July he sent out a flag of truce, and the remainder of the day was spent in discussing terms. At ten o'clock on the following morning the Union army occupied the city, and before evening Sherman had started with over 50,000 men to deal with Johnston.

The fall of the fortress was soon followed by the surrender of Port Hudson, the last Confederate stronghold on the river, and the Mississippi was now open to the Union from its head waters to the Gulf of Mexico. Navigation was immediately resumed, and on the 16th July a merchant steamer which had left St. Louis on the 8th arrived at New Orleans. Lincoln was at last able to say that "the Father of Waters rolled unvexed to the sea."

The fall of Vicksburg, coinciding with Lee's retreat from Gettysburg, was the turning-point of the war, and the news of the double victory sent the Northern people wild with delight, reviving in them the determination to continue the war which had grown faint under the failures of 1862. The joyful sense of relief which was felt over Lee's withdrawal from Pennsylvania gave to Gettysburg a prominence which tended somewhat to overshadow the capture of Vicksburg in the West, but as time went by the significance of the latter event was seen in its true light. The fall of Vicksburg sealed the fate of the Confederacy. The capture of the Mississippi rent the Confederacy in twain, depriving it of the resources in men and food which otherwise would have flowed to it from the great States of Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas. Taking the Confederate position as a whole its left flank was now definitely turned and the Union had in the Mississippi both a splendid line of communication and a base for operations against the very heart of the Southern States. Although the war was not yet over the end

was practically certain. From the great trial of strength between the two sections of the country the Northern States were to issue victorious ; the Union was to continue ; and America was to survive, not as two unfriendly congeries of states, but as one great and undivided nation.

## KÖNIGGRÄTZ

3RD JULY, 1866

SEE MAPS 2 AND 3

THE preceding chapter dealt with a crisis in the history of a young nation. Of that nation a section which wished to secede was forcibly restrained by the other portion which was determined at all costs to maintain the Union. Within a year of the firing of the last shots in the struggle in America a war was to be fought in Europe with an object diametrically opposite. The present chapter is concerned with the expulsion from a confederation of great antiquity of the member which had the longest and most historic claims to supremacy within it. Fought with but a brief interval between them the two wars present, therefore, a striking contrast ; and not only in the political objective were the two struggles widely dissimilar. Both were indeed civil wars in the true sense, but the factors which dominated the two contests were entirely unlike. In the American Civil War the question of naval supremacy entered into the contest, whereas in the war between Austria and Prussia the struggle, so far as the two main contestants were concerned, was waged altogether on land. Again, while in Europe the fighting was carried out by professional armies the war in America was almost entirely waged by improvised forces. The greatest point of dissimilarity, however, is to be found in the difference in the duration of the two

struggles. Whereas it took the North four years to wear down the Confederacy to such a state of exhaustion as to enforce its adhesion to the Union, in Europe Prussia achieved the expulsion of Austria from Germany so quickly as to gain for the campaign the designation of the Seven Weeks' War. But though there is a sharply defined contrast between the two wars, both in their conduct and objective, there is this similarity between the state of things in the United States and Germany in the " 'sixties " of the nineteenth century : in each case the political differences could be decided only by war. The group of States in the one case which wished to go out was compelled to remain in, and the State in the other case which was desirous of remaining in was forced to go out by the same method—armed force. In a more perfect world such differences might have been adjusted by less drastic measures. But a perfect world is a long way off, and doubtless when States disagree in future the same crude method of compulsion will be employed for many generations to come.

The war between Austria and Prussia in 1866 was the climax to a rivalry of long standing, and the conditions which prevailed in that year will be the better understood if a brief survey be made of the relations between the two States from early days. In its elemental stage the rivalry was not so much the result of the clash of interests of two separate States as of the friction engendered by the growth of two families to power in the same confederation or bond—the Holy Roman Empire. The families were those of the houses of Habsburg and Hohenzollern ; and in the contest for pride of place in Germany the former got a valuable start. Rudolf of Habsburg was elected Emperor in 1273 ; and as a matter of fact, both in

such elevation and in his seizure of Austria three years later from the King of Bohemia, his staunchest ally was a Hohenzollern, his brother-in-law, Frederick II, Margrave of Nuremberg. The prestige which was attached to the position of Emperor was great ; nevertheless, in the curious political world represented by the Holy Roman Empire, with its unrealities and vague aspirations, power was to be won far more by family aggrandizement than by statecraft, a fact which the Habsburg family were not slow to realize, and by a series of extraordinarily lucky marriages in the fifteenth century their power rose to immense heights. So much so that when in 1519 Charles V was elected to the imperial dignity he was not merely Duke of Austria and Emperor, but King of Spain, Lord of the Netherlands and the county of Burgundy, King of Naples and Sicily, Duke of Milan and prospective ruler of Hungary and Bohemia, which realms fell to him soon afterwards.

With such titles and dignities the Habsburg Duke of Austria stood out in solitary grandeur amid all the rulers of the petty marks and principalities of the Holy Roman Empire, and with him no Hohenzollern could challenge comparison. That family was now divided into two branches, from one of which—the branch destined to rise to eminence—Frederick of Hohenzollern had been in 1417 invested with the title and dignities of Elector of Brandenburg, a mark or march which was primarily a military colony planted north-east of the Empire to control and hold back the Slavs between Elbe and Oder. And if there was little comparison between the two families as regards their power and standing there was none between Austria and Prussia as states. Austria was a duchy, but among the mosaic of princi-



palities, marks and ecclesiastical tenures which made up the Empire the very name of Prussia was not to be found. The territory thus known represented a Slavonic enclave in Polish territory held by the Teutonic Knights, a military order which had come into being in the Crusades. Nevertheless, destiny was at work levelling up the fortunes of the Hohenzollerns with those of the Habsburgs. In the early years of the glory of the Habsburg Charles V the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights was Albert of Hohenzollern, and the very year before that in which the Habsburgs had added Bohemia and Hungary to their family possessions Albert suppressed the order and made East Prussia an hereditary duchy with himself as first duke. In course of time, owing to the failure of male heirs, East Prussia was to pass to the Hohenzollerns of Brandenburg, and the expansion of the Mark and its ultimate transference into the powerful State of Prussia was to be begun.

But before this was to happen an event occurred which was to mark the first clear-cut cleavage between the two Houses. The crisis of the Reformation came in 1529 when the Diet of Spires reaffirmed the old edict of Worms condemning Luther's heresy. A group of princes of the Empire, of whom one of the leaders was the Elector of Brandenburg, immediately protested against the edict and withdrew from the Diet, thus founding and giving the name to the sect of Protestants. The crisis thus brought about was pregnant with importance for Central Europe. By placing himself at the head of the new movement Charles might have become King of a united and Protestant Germany, secured for a Habsburg dynasty. But the prejudices of his Spanish subjects and the interests of his European policy stood in the way, and his



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efforts were devoted to an attempt to uproot Protestantism by force of arms. His failure was complete, and the Peace of Augsburg in 1555 left Germany permanently divided into two religious camps, with Habsburg and Hohenzollern on opposing sides.

For nearly a hundred years longer the religious question overshadowed and influenced rivalries and led to changes in the composition and development of European States. In 1618 began the Thirty Years War. In its earlier stages a contest between the Catholicism of the South and the new Protestantism of the North, the struggle developed later into an attempt to make the House of Habsburg supreme in Germany. The Habsburg emperors were now deserting their former attitude of tolerance in religious affairs and were becoming aggressively Catholic, a change of policy largely brought about by the growing power of the Hohenzollerns. By the extinction of the Franconian line all its possessions passed to the elder Electoral or Brandenburg branch of the Hohenzollern family, and it did not suit the Habsburgs that a pronouncedly Protestant house should hold such extensive territories in the north of Germany. For a time the Elector of Brandenburg made a short-sighted attempt to preserve neutrality, but such policy soon became impossible and, with the Elector of Saxony, he allied himself with Gustavus Adolphus by whose aid Europe was saved from a Habsburg ascendancy and Protestantism was preserved in Northern Germany. When peace came at last in 1648 the House of Habsburg had definitely failed in its attempt to establish its supremacy, and in the territorial changes which followed the House of Hohenzollern was enriched. Brandenburg at this moment was fortunate in that it was ruled by a wise and capable

sovereign, Frederick William, upon whom history has conferred the title of the Great Elector. "And yet there hardly ever came to sovereign power a young man of twenty under more distressing, hopeless-looking circumstances. Political significance Brandenburg had none; a mere Protestant appendage dragged about by a Papist Kaiser. His father's prime minister was in the interest of his enemies; not Brandenburg's servant, but Austria's. The very commandants of his fortresses, commandant of Spandau more especially, refused to obey Frederick William on his accession, were bound to obey the Kaiser in the first place." <sup>1</sup>

At the close of the Thirty Years War the scattered nature of his dominions seemed to militate against the formation of a powerful State. But for nearly half a century, until his death in 1688, the Great Elector steadily pursued his way through apparently unconquerable difficulties until he had succeeded in laying the foundations of the future greatness of the House of Hohenzollern. Under him the resources of Brandenburg were reorganized, and the straggling possessions of the Hohenzollerns began to assume an appearance of administrative, if not of territorial, unity. The year 1656 was a landmark in the history, not only of his House but of Prussia as a State, for in that year, taking advantage of the state of war between Sweden and Poland, the Great Elector shook off the Polish suzerainty over the Duchy of Prussia which had passed to his branch of the family; and a long conflict with Sweden secured to the Hohenzollerns the Baltic lands of Pomerania, so that at the Great Elector's death his House held through Northern Germany scattered possessions almost from the Rhine to the Vistula. These with the Brandenburg homeland along the

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle: *Frederick the Great*.

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River Oder, and a group of claims upon neighbours' territories, formed if not a State at least a framework of frontiers to be filled in as opportunity presented itself. And in his reign there is clearly visible the germ of that military power which was to distinguish the Hohenzollern House thereafter. The Great Elector recognized that Brandenburg must be a despotism dependent on a standing army. To this end he reorganized his armed forces and made them into an instrument formidable and efficient even if the numbers composing them were small. His policy was continued by his successor Frederick III, and the latter, in return for assistance rendered in the War of the Spanish Succession, was allowed by the Emperor in 1700 to assume the title of King. The new monarch took his title not from Brandenburg but from the erstwhile Duchy of Prussia which lay outside the Empire, and where he, as King, would owe allegiance to no over-lord.

Thus the opening of the eighteenth century found the head of the Hohenzollern family a King, ruling, it is true, over a State which was not continuous, but was, nevertheless, a great augmentation of the original Mark of Brandenburg. As a ruling House the Hohenzollerns differed no longer in kind but merely in degree from that of the Habsburgs. And between the Houses there was a rivalry founded on religious animosity. Each represented a different branch of the Christian faith, a difference accentuated by the recollections of the horror, the cruelty and the misery of the Thirty Years War. The sufferings of such a war had burnt indelibly into the souls of the German people, and von Sybel, the German historian, has placed on record the statement that even in 1866 the memories of them had not passed away.

The newly made King of Prussia was to find that mere merit counted for little with his brother monarchs. He had to undergo the most exquisite mortifications at their hands. As Macaulay well said, by the other crowned heads of Europe he was regarded just as a Nabob or Commissary who had bought a title would have been regarded by peers whose ancestors had been attainted for treason against the Plantagenets. The envy of the class which Frederick had quitted and the disdain of the class into which he intruded were marked in significant ways. The Elector of Saxony at first refused to acknowledge the new Majesty. Lewis the Fourteenth looked down on his brother King with ineffable disdain, and as for Austria she exacted large sacrifices in return for her grudging and ungracious recognition. In her case such action was prompted entirely by jealousy, and for forty years Prussia was unable to avenge the many slights placed upon her by the Habsburgs. But the combination of a finely tempered instrument and a genius competent to use it was to be granted the mortified Prussia.

In 1740 Frederick William I, King of Prussia, died. In the history of Europe he had played but a subordinate part. But he had in his lifetime been obsessed with a mania which was to prove of immense service to a new State whose policy was absolutism backed by military force. He had developed a passion for soldiers, and he had collected, drilled, exercised and maintained them until, so far as discipline and precision in manœuvre were concerned, they were the first troops in Europe. To this inheritance succeeded his son Frederick, afterwards to be called the Great, a young man endowed with an unsuspected genius for war, unbridled ambition and a longing for an oppor-

tunity to punish Austria and thus avenge the humiliation of his family.

To the already enormous army left him by his father Frederick added sixteen battalions. Unlike his father the new sovereign intended his army for fighting and not for mere display—for the field and not the drill ground. He was impatient for an opportunity and ready to pick a quarrel with Austria on the slightest pretext. He had not long to wait, for less than five months after his accession there arrived the news that the Emperor Charles VI had died at Vienna.

The Emperor left no son, and during the closing years of his life his principal object had been to secure for his daughter Maria Theresa the inheritance of his domains. This succession had been formally recognized by the Powers of Europe, not excluding Prussia, and when the Emperor died from no quarter did the young Maria Theresa receive stronger assurances of friendship and support than from her neighbour the King of Prussia. Frederick, however, was not long in making a tentative proposal to the young archduchess and Queen of Hungary by which Silesia should be conceded to him in return for his military and financial support in the matter of the Pragmatic Sanction, but the suggestion was received with the rude arrogance which characterized the attitude of the Habsburgs towards Prussia. The envoy was curtly reminded that the feudal duty of his Prussian Majesty was to present ewer and towel to the representative of the House of Austria and not to lay down conditions on weightier matters. The reply was fatuous and imbecile to a degree, for Frederick was no Cosmo Bradwardine to rejoice in the privilege of service to a superior. A monarch himself, he had addressed Maria Theresa as an equal, and the insult rankled in his vain and



ambitious brain. He immediately resolved to assemble a great army with speed and secrecy, to invade Silesia and to add that rich province to his kingdom. The territory was quickly overrun, and in 1742, acting on the advice of the British Government, Maria Theresa made over Silesia to the Prussian monarch. Three years later another campaign was waged between the two States, but Silesia was still in Frederick's grip. Eight years of uneasy peace ensued, but the high-spirited Maria Theresa was determined to recover her stolen province. In the great European War, which lasted for seven years from 1756, Austria and Prussia were on opposing sides and at the close of the struggle confronted each other alone.

In 1763 the Peace of Huberstburg was signed. The war was over. Frederick emerged from the contest victorious; he still held Silesia, for which the blood of more than a million men had been poured out like water; and he had shown himself unquestionably the greatest soldier in Europe. His victories reacted on the fortunes of Prussia as a State. The defence of his dominions by the Prussian King against the forces of Austria, Russia and France stirred up the latent patriotic feelings of the numerous small German States. As a military Power Prussia could challenge comparison with Austria, for the victories won by her rivalled those gained by Austrian arms under Wallenstein and Eugene. No longer was Prussia merely the parvenu and upstart State to be mortified by the humiliations imposed upon her by the Habsburgs. She was a State whose title to the ultimate hegemony of Germany must henceforth be taken into serious consideration.

From the material point of view Austria had weathered the storm better than her rival. Prussia



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had suffered cruelly ; Berlin had been plundered more than once ; the population of Prussia had seriously diminished and a sixth of the males capable of bearing arms had perished in war. The fields lay uncultivated, and in village after village not a single inhabitant remained. Frederick, however, set himself to repair the frightful damage to his country, and even in his reconstruction he was evolving further schemes for enlarging his dominions. He had long had his eye on Poland, and when the King of that country died in 1763 Frederick and Catherine of Russia set on foot a scheme to nominate a sovereign for that ill-fated country. Nine years later the curtain was rung down on the dismemberment of Poland to the extent of about one-third of her territory, Austria being admitted to a share of the spoils by the other two conspirators. Prussia's share was of great importance ; it consisted of Ermeland and what was called Royal Prussia (the West Prussia of yesterday), with the exception of Dantzic and Thorn. Though it was a bitter disappointment to the Prussian King to forgo those towns the territory gained was of immense value. Frederick was now enabled to bridge over the gap between Brandenburg and East Prussia, and the main portion of his dominions now formed a continuous State. He died in 1786, leaving Prussia a leading power of Europe, with a marvellous military record, well-developed resources and a clear-cut policy in German affairs.

The final dismemberment of Poland added to the territories of both Austria and Prussia, the latter coming off with the advantage and having secured the all-important towns of Dantzic and Thorn. The upheaval of the French Revolution caused the two rivals to ally themselves as protagonists of monarchical rights, but the humiliating defeat of Valmy drove the

ill-assorted pair asunder, and later both went down in ruin before the all-conquering Napoleon. At Austerlitz in 1805 Austria suffered with her ally Russia a crushing defeat, and in the following year disaster unredeemed overtook Prussia at Jena and Auerstadt. Both States made heroic attempts to retrieve their downfall ; but when Austria, overthrown at Wagram in 1809, was compelled to accept a humiliating peace the championship of German freedom passed to Prussia. In that State a marvellous regeneration took place. The Treaty of Tilsit in 1807 had robbed Prussia of half her territory, left her with a population of only four and a half million souls, and compelled her to accept a limitation of her armed forces to a figure of 43,000 men. But the genius and energy of the great triumvirate, Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Stein, brought about a military resurrection. Universal service was adopted, a large and trained reserve was built up, and reforms of far-reaching nature were introduced in discipline and administration—all in defiance of the peremptory command of Napoleon. The terrible winter of 1812-1813 brought Prussia her opportunity. The indescribable procession of broken French soldiers creeping westward from Russia raised new hope. Allied with Russia, Frederick William declared war upon France. The War of Liberation had begun, and Prussia in 1813 with an army of nominally 43,000 men had in reality over 150,000 trained to arms. Though defeated at Lutzen and Bautzen the Prussians fought so tenaciously that Napoleon could not profit by his victories. He admitted that the Prussians were his most dangerous antagonists, and in the culminating battle of Leipzig, Prussian troops played an important part in the allied victory. By this time Prussia by a superb effort had

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brought her total contingent up to nearly 300,000 men, for a Landwehr had been organized on the principle of universal service.

After the abdication of Napoleon the Great Powers met at Vienna to re-draw the map of Europe. Not the least important question to decide was the future constitution of Germany. After a thousand years of life the hoary old anachronism, the Holy Roman Empire, had been stricken to death at Austerlitz, and since 1806 the Habsburgs had contented themselves with the title of Emperor of Austria. Thus the way seemed clear for the establishment of a new central authority; but, if a united Germany were to be established, there was the question who was to be its head. Austria would not obey Prussia, nor Prussia Austria. Before this problem could be solved, however, there were rectifications of frontiers and territory to be carried out. The Congress rewarded Prussia with considerable territorial compensation, chiefly in Western Germany. The significance to Prussia of this great new acquisition on either bank of the Rhine was, from a military point of view, very great. Geographically, it brought her into immediate contact with France; it made her the guardian of the middle Rhine, and in a sense the protector of Western Germany, a position hitherto held by Austria. Further, there was the great military asset furnished by the industrial and economic resources of Westphalia. While Prussia was thus established on the Rhine, Austria exchanged the Netherlands for Lombardy and Venetia, and consolidated her strength in the south-east. But though Prussia had no reason to be dissatisfied with her increase of potential military power she was beaten by Austria when it came to the question of the new constitution of Germany.

The struggles of the Napoleonic period had fed the desire of the Germans for reunion, but there was one serious obstacle to its fulfilment. That obstacle was the absolute sovereignty which Napoleon—at the expense of the Emperor—had given to the kings he had created in Germany. These kings were now exceedingly loth to part with their unexpected independence. The problem was a formidable one, and the two diplomatic solvers from Prussia and Austria, in the persons of Stein and Metternich, proposed solutions diametrically opposed. It was useless to think of breathing new life into the corpse of the Empire, and Stein favoured the separation of North Germany from South Germany, with the formation from them of two strong Federal States, under Prussia and Austria respectively. To this solution Metternich was inflexibly opposed. The aim of his policy was to make Austria supreme in Germany, and indeed in Europe, and he conceived that Austrian interests could best be served by a loose confederation of independent and co-equal sovereigns. After long deliberation the proposal of Metternich was adopted by the Congress and the Federal Act was signed on June 8th, 1815.

The new Germanic Confederation was to comprise thirty-nine sovereign states and free cities, of which latter there were four, and the concerns of the Bund were to be managed by a Federal Diet at Frankfort. In this Diet Austria was to preside. The whole of the kingdom of Prussia was not included in the Confederation, and the Empire of Austria was only represented for its German parts; and, regarded as an organic constitution, the Bund of 1815 had many glaring anomalies. But, anomalous though it was, the Confederation was a complete triumph for Austria. Metternich had clearly realized that it was only by

championing the rights of the minor princes that the ambition of the Hohenzollerns could be curbed and the lost authority of the Habsburgs restored, and in this he had succeeded. Further, with the assent of confederated Germany and the sanction of European approval, Austria had been replaced in her immemorial position as head and leader of the German race. In the regenerated Europe Prussia was publicly assigned to a position subordinate to that of her rival. The tension which already existed between the two States was now subjected to a further strain.

Though successful in the great political issue, Austria within a few years made a profound blunder over another question. During the first half of the nineteenth century Germany was economically and commercially the most backward country in Western Europe. As for Prussia her fiscal arrangements were extraordinarily complex ; sixty-seven different tariffs were in existence ; and her frontiers touched twenty-eight different States. A scheme on free trade lines was introduced in 1818, confined at first to Prussia alone ; but in the following year there was the first modest step towards a Customs Union or *Zollverein*. Within ten years the whole of Germany, with the significant exception of one State, was awake to the advantages of the policy initiated by Prussia. That State was Austria. Towards the earlier stages of this remarkable development Austria manifested complete indifference. The importance of the *Zollverein* to Germany in general and to Prussia in particular can, however, hardly be exaggerated. By 1829 the northern and southern systems had been united into a real Customs Union including 17 States with a population of 26,000,000. Its influence was by no means purely economic, for it brought the sentiment of German



nationality out of the regions of hope and fancy into the one of positive and material interests. The general feeling in Germany towards the *Zollverein* was that it was the first step towards the Germanization of the people, while the important feature, as regards Prussia, was that it united the German States in bonds of mutual economic interest under Prussian leadership, and that it accustomed them to the prospect of the exclusion of Austria from the Germanic body.

But, outweighing in importance all questions of tariffs and frontiers, was the deep and ever-growing feeling of nationalism which was now diffused through the whole German people. It was a new growth rather than a re-birth, for long before 1815 Germany had ceased to be a nation in the modern acceptance of the term, and an attitude of life which can only be described as cosmopolitanism had taken the place of a real national feeling. The Habsburg emperors had for centuries been concerned chiefly with the aggrandizement of their House, and this fact, combined with the number of separate governments—over three hundred—which made up the Empire, brought about the inevitable result. No real national unity was possible, and the educated classes began to lean towards a policy of cosmopolitanism. French became the fashionable language, and the German aimed at being a citizen of the world rather than the national of a State. Lessing professed to have no love of country, and Schiller wrote “Germans, do not seek to form a nation ; content yourselves with being men.” Then came the French Revolution, and after the Revolution came Napoleon. He destroyed the Empire, which officially ceased to exist in 1806. A few years of foreign oppression called to life a sentiment which had been dormant, if not dead, for centuries. Danger and suffering felt



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in common brought before the eyes of the sufferers the need for union. Then the Germans realized that they were a nation and destroyed the destroyer. The spirit of cosmopolitanism was not actually killed, but it was now opposed by an intense and powerful spirit of nationality. In this new Germany a leader State had to be found; not a State occupying the mere position of official head and endowed with the shadowy presidency of the Diet, but a State that would be a real leader in the twin causes of nationalism and union.

Two States of the Confederation alone had serious claims to put forward, Austria and Prussia. But in a period of liberal and national enthusiasms Austria was singularly unsuited to pose as leader. Three-fourths of the subjects of the Emperor of Austria were not Germans at all, and Austrian opposition to nationalism and all its consequences was irreconcilable. Apart from this, Austria—and through Austria the whole of Germany—was governed by Metternich to whom liberalism—and not only liberalism, but every cause to which liberalism lent support—was anathema. The statesman who could order disciplinary action to be taken against fiery young students of the Lord Magnus Charters type for having publicly burned a corporal's cane and a Uhlan's stays was not likely to lead a nation far on the road to progress. The reactionary policy of Austria's ruler aroused a deep feeling of discontent in the Germany in which the feeling of nationalism had taken root, and by 1840 Young Germany was asking, "What has Austria done for civilization and what is she doing to-day?" Austria, in the eyes of many in Germany, contributed nothing of real weight to the serious criticism of life, nothing that guided through to the splendour of the

dawn breaking red on the horizon. "In the majestic march of the German mind Austria lagged with the camp followers and sutlers." Her institutions were obsolete; her policy and ideas poverty-stricken and threadbare; her religion was crass ultramontanism. Prussia was the strongest, most up-to-date and the most efficient State in the Confederation, and to many it seemed that in her were to be found the leader and leadership craved by the national and liberal movements of the day.

The year 1848 brought matters to a crisis. Apart from the particularist revolutionary struggles in the various States there was the wider issue for national unity affecting Germany as a whole. The essence of the movement was that the liberalism which burst forth in the revolutionary months of 1848 looked to a closer union of Germany under the leadership of Prussia, and at the expense of Austria. The first declared symptom of this desire came from Prussia, when on March 21st took place the formal reconciliation of the King of Prussia and the citizens of Berlin. But though Frederick William could ride through the streets wearing the red, black, and gold emblematic of German unity, saluted by the crowd as Emperor of Germany, his absolutist convictions revolted against the idea of receiving the imperial power from the hands of the people whose authority he despised. The desire for national unity which extended far beyond the borders of Prussia was, however, not to be so easily evaded. The Federal Diet, which since 1815 had been the mouthpiece of the reactionary Metternich, bowed before the storm of March, 1848. In the short-lived Frankfort Parliament which took its place, the German question was the real point of issue. The "great Germans" were all for the in-

clusion of all the non-German provinces of Austria, while the "little Germans" insisted that the inclusion of any part of Austria would be a fatal bar to German unity. The "little Germans" carried the day, and on March 28th, 1849, Frederick William IV was "elected" German Emperor.

Intensely antidemocratic in feeling and generally loyal to Habsburg tradition, the King of Prussia experienced considerable reluctance in accepting the Imperial crown offered him by a majority of middle-class doctrinaires. But the real and formidable obstacle to yielding to the wishes of a representative assembly of Germans was the unmistakable hostility of Austria. Austria would not be tamely driven out of the Confederation, and the acceptance by the King of Prussia of the headship of Germany would mean war. The Prussian Army was unready; that of Austria was flushed with recent victories in Italy and Hungary. It was this factor which probably decided the issue when on April 3rd, 1849, Frederick William refused the crown, and the unity of Germany was postponed.

The triumph of Austria was complete. But it was not enough for Austria that Prussia had stood aside when the headship of a united Germany had been almost thrust upon her. She was to be reduced to her former position of inferiority, and, as a Power, was to be humiliated, if not destroyed. The only test by which the problem could be solved was that of war, and Austria did not shrink from it. When trouble broke out between the reactionary Elector of Hesse-Cassel and his revolting subjects in 1850, it looked as if the issue could be forced, for the Elector appealed to the Federal Diet, in which Austrian influence was supreme, and the subjects looked to Prussia. But the Tsar

placed himself unmistakably on the side of Austria. Manteuffel whispered into Frederick William's ear that the Prussian Army could not withstand the hardy and well-trying soldiers of Austria. Schwarzenberg met the Prussian Minister at Olmütz to arrange all the differences between the two Powers. And Prussia crept back to her second place in the fold of the Germanic Confederation.

Thus the attempt of the German liberals to stampede Germany into union, under Prussia and with Austria excluded, had ended in ignominious failure. Two main causes contributed to the fiasco. On the one hand, monarchical and legitimist traditions were still intensely strong; Austria still counted for much in the eyes of "people that mattered"; even Frederick William himself saw in the Emperor of Austria not only a brother monarch but the real heir of the grandeur that was the Holy Roman Empire. On the other hand, the enthusiasts for nationalism had imagined that eloquence and phrases could do the work of either the employment or the threat of employment of armed force. But in a State which had been imbued with the teachings of Clausewitz—the substance of which was that war is simply a continuation of State policy—it should not be impossible to find a common denominator to the action of the various classes which made up Prussia. The liberals could supply the enthusiasm and driving power; the conservative class could bring to the common stock the traditions of loyalty to the throne, undoubted bureaucratic efficiency and the power of military command. If, therefore, the question of the supremacy of Prussia could be lifted from the doctrinaire plane to one of Prussian patriotism; if the opposing classes and castes could be enlisted under one banner; and, above all, if an

efficient army could be made available for use if necessary, Prussia *per se* might well succeed where the liberalism of Germany as a whole had failed. One man in Prussia saw clearly the opportunity which had opened for his country.

That man was Bismarck. Born in the same year as that in which the Congress of Vienna had finished its labours Bismarck had entered political life in 1847, and in 1851 was appointed by the King to the important position of Prussian delegate to the Federal Diet. Till then he had been, as he has himself confessed, a "terrible Junker," the avowed enemy of democracy; and in consequence he had poured scorn upon the attempt to unite Germany which had been made at Frankfort in 1848. At that time he greatly admired Austria as the "extinguisher of revolution" and as "the inheritor of ancient German might which has so often gloriously wielded the German sword." He even rejoiced at the humiliation of Prussia at Olmütz. But once in the Diet Bismarck witnessed the deep-seated hatred of Austria for Prussia, and the revelation brought home to him the prospect of inevitable conflict between the two States. As a result of his experiences he became a convert to the cause of German nationalism, realizing that it was by the exploitation of that cause that Prussia could best fight her way to the front.

With his inborn loathing for "romanticism" and sentimentality Bismarck realized the importance of the possession by Prussia of a first-class army. The time was favourable for bringing such question forward, for the Italian War of 1859 had alarmed the military party as to the danger threatening from the "old enemy" France, and the Prince Regent—afterwards King William I—was determined to remodel

the Prussian Army. The reception of the scheme for reorganization when presented to the Lower House in Prussia was, however, distinctly unfavourable and a constitutional crisis quickly developed. The King talked of abdication, but yielded to the insistent reminders of his Chief of the Staff, von Moltke, and of his Minister of War, von Roon, that the army as a monarchical institution was at stake. The Prussian parliament declined to grant the money necessary for the military reforms unless the King would make concessions which would wreck the scheme. The cabinet resigned, and William retorted by making Bismarck president of the ministry. Within a few days the new minister showed his hand. "The great questions of the time are not to be solved by speeches and parliamentary votes, but by blood and iron." The words fell like a bombshell on Germany, and even William I was for the moment dismayed. But Bismarck never faltered; he spent money which had not been voted; for four years the State was administered without a constitutionally settled budget; and he carried through the scheme of reorganization which gave Prussia an army suitable for her aims.

The next step was to pick a quarrel with Austria, and an opportunity was soon presented by the interminable question of the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein—one of the most difficult and complicated questions of European history. As far back as 1460 the two Duchies had been united to the kingdom of Denmark; Holstein, however, had formed part of the Holy Roman Empire, though Schleswig had not; both Duchies contained large numbers of inhabitants of German origin who were discontented with their lot, and in 1848 Prussia had intervened—though with conspicuous ill-success—on behalf of the insurgents.



Now in 1864 the question was to the fore again. Frederick VII, King of Denmark and Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, had died the previous year without heirs male and, as the Salic law prevailed in the Duchies though not in Denmark, the whole question was reopened. Bismarck saw his chance. He would induce Austria to come in with Prussia to help pluck the chestnuts from the fire and would then seize the booty, appeal to Prussian patriotism to support him, and leave Austria the choice between abject submission or war.

The rupture with Denmark was not long delayed, and in 1864 Austria and Prussia, repudiating the action of the Diet, intervened together by force of arms. The war ended with the early and total defeat of Denmark, who renounced all her rights over the Duchies to Austria and Prussia conjointly. Meanwhile a new claimant had appeared in the person of Prince Frederick of Augustenburg, who wished to form the Duchies into a German state with himself as ruler. Austria favoured the proposal, but Bismarck began at once to work for their addition to Prussia. On August 14th, 1865, the Convention of Gastein was concluded, by which, while the principle of condominium was to be maintained, Austria was to have the administration of Holstein, while Prussia was to be responsible for Schleswig. The latter power was also to have the right to construct a canal through Holstein from the Baltic to the North Sea, and Kiel was to become the base of a German Federal fleet, though the harbour was to be under the control of Prussia.

By the condominium Holstein was now an Austrian enclave between Prussian Schleswig and Prussia proper. The scheme had obvious difficulties and Bismarck was determined to make it unworkable. A policy of pin-

pricks goaded Austria to fury ; early in 1866 Notes were being exchanged between Berlin and Vienna ; and for the next few weeks the exchange of these documents went on, each side striving to throw the onus of a breach upon the other, while endeavouring to make its own intentions and actions appear merely defensive in character. In diplomacy, however, Prussia was to secure an immense advantage. Bismarck had talked over Napoleon III into a promise of neutrality, and in April, 1866, he came to terms with Victor Emanuel for the active assistance of Italy.

This last action of Prussia stung Austria to the quick. War was now plainly inevitable, and mobilization was ordered on both sides, although the pretence of diplomatic negotiations with regard to the Duchies still went on. On June 1st Austria announced that the settlement of Schleswig-Holstein must be entrusted to the Germanic Confederation, to which Prussia retorted that since Austria had not fulfilled her obligations, Prussian troops would take action in Holstein. On June 7th General von Manteuffel crossed the frontier at the head of 12,000 men. The Austrian commander, with a force of barely 5,000, was unable to oppose the advance, and retired first to Altona and thence to Hamburg, where the Austrian troops entrained for South Germany. Hostilities had now actually begun, although the formal declaration of war was still delayed. This was, however, not long deferred, for Austria forced the issue by an appeal to the Confederation on June 14th. The Diet agreed to mobilize the Federal army against Prussia, whereupon Prussia formally withdrew from the Confederation. Bavaria, Saxony, Hanover and the two Hesses sided with Austria, while Prussia was supported by some of the petty States of the north and the cities of Hamburg, Lübeck and

Bremen. The inevitable had come to pass, and the question as to whether Austria or Prussia was to be the head of Germany was now to be decided.

Bismarck's task was for the moment over and Prussia's destiny was in the hands of von Moltke, the Chief of the Staff and the virtual commander of the Prussian Army. Helmuth Carl Bernard von Moltke was born in 1800 in the little town of Parchim in Mecklenburg and, owing to the fact that his father settled in Danish territory, became by naturalization a Danish subject in his childhood. Entering the Military Academy at Copenhagen at an early age he joined the Danish service, but left it soon to enter the Prussian Army in which his father had served before him. When twenty-two years old Moltke was attached to the Prussian Staff College at Berlin and, after several years' service on the staff, proceeded to Constantinople, where he became the military adviser of the Sultan Mahmoud II. While in the East Moltke had his first experience of war, taking part in the campaign in Asia Minor between the Sultan's troops and those of his rebellious vassal, Mehemet Ali, Viceroy of Egypt. At the age of forty-eight Moltke became chief of the staff of the IVth Corps, which was then commanded by the Crown Prince, and ten years later, when his corps commander had become Regent, Moltke became Chief of the General Staff. Under his guidance the regeneration of the Prussian Army took place, and he devoted great attention to the reorganization rendered possible by Bismarck's resolute action and by the genius of the Minister of War, Albrecht von Roon. The standing army, including the reserve, was increased from 200,000 to 400,000 men, and the Landwehr or second-line troops were completely separated from the active army and told off for duties on the lines of

communications. It was during this period that the whole Prussian Army was re-armed with the needle gun, a breech-loading rifle which had been accepted for use as far back as 1836, but which had been for years kept secret by the Prussian government. In range and flatness of trajectory the needle gun was actually inferior to the muzzle-loader of the Austrians, but this inferiority was completely outweighed by two immense advantages. The rate of fire of the needle gun was far in advance of that of any muzzle-loader, and it could be loaded in the lying-down position. The moral effect produced by the possibility of developing rapid fire action with the minimum of exposure on the part of the firer was bound to give Prussia a great advantage in a war against any Power not so armed.

Confronted with the task of fighting Austria, von Moltke realized at once the vital importance of speed. It was above all things necessary to keep France out of the arena, and a protracted struggle might give Napoleon III just the opportunity he wished for intervening as a kind of international referee. Speed was also called for by the conditions in Germany itself. The war was extremely unpopular in Prussia, for, in spite of the earnest desire of the liberal classes in Prussia for the union of Germany with the exclusion of Austria from the Confederation, the blood and iron methods by which these were to be achieved shocked public opinion. The war would be, after all, a "war between brothers"; and outside the Junker class and the immediate entourage of the throne Bismarck's policy was detested. Even near the throne there was regret at the course things had taken, and at a council of war the Crown Prince had voted against hostilities. The best way to counteract the lukewarmness, and,

indeed, the actual hostility of a large class in Prussia, was to bring off an early and decisive victory. For this, speed was essential, but unfortunately for von Moltke the King was reluctant to take upon himself the onus of opening the war, and accordingly Austria gained a start in her mobilization and preparatory arrangements.

Austria, of course, was not the only foe. As a matter of fact the war would have to be fought out on three fronts, or four if Prussia's ally Italy be taken into consideration. Of the three fronts actually in Germany, Hanover and Hesse-Cassel together formed one, South Germany the second, while the third and most formidable was represented by Austria and Saxony. Moltke estimated the force of the first group as some 36,000 men, that of the second—which comprised Bavaria, Würtemberg and Hesse-Darmstadt—at 100,000, while it was reckoned that Austria and Saxony between them could put 264,000 into the field. Neither the first nor second of these groups was, however, considered a formidable enemy, and Moltke was well aware of the imperfect organization which prevailed in them in time of peace; although it was obvious that, if left unnoticed in the rear, Hanover and Hesse-Cassel could exert a very significant threat against the communications between Prussia and the Rhine and Elbe Duchies. But, after all, the key to the whole strategical situation was the third group, of which the Austrian Army provided some 240,000 men. The defeat of Austria would cut the ground from under the feet of her German allies, and to Moltke the safest plan seemed to be to direct the bulk of the Prussian forces to the primary theatre of operations, and to leave merely an irreducible minimum to deal with the other opponents.



The necessity of securing a speedy victory pointed to the desirability of carrying out an invasion of Austria at the earliest possible moment. Military opinion in Prussia was strongly in favour of a concentration in Lusatia as a preliminary to a single offensive, a view shared by Moltke, but it was found impossible to put this scheme into practice owing to the unwillingness of the King to strike the first blow, and to the fact that the supply and railway arrangements were not adapted for the stay of the whole army in one small area for an indefinite period. The only thing, therefore, to be done was to move the Prussian forces by every available line of railway to more than one area of concentration, and the troops to take the field were accordingly divided into three armies, the advance to the frontier beginning on May 16th. Railheads were fixed at Zeitz, Halle, Herzberg, Görlitz, Schweidnitz and Neisse, the Prussian Army being then distributed along a line some 280 miles in length. This enforced dissemination had very serious disadvantages, and the problem was how to bring the various portions into closer touch. The two possible methods were either a closing in from flanks to centre behind the frontier, that is to say, in Prussian territory, or a concentration over the frontier in the enemy's country. King William, for political reasons, gave his vote for the former project, which was therefore carried out, and by June 8th the strategical deployment of the Prussians may be said to be complete and their troops were disposed along the frontier from Schildau on the west to Waldenburg on the east.

It was at first supposed that the Austrians were assembling in Bohemia, covered by the troops of Saxony, but soon a copy of the Austrian *ordre de bataille* came into Moltke's possession from which it



was seen that the enemy main body was assembling not in Bohemia but in Moravia, and on the 15th June Moltke was at last able to set the Prussian forces in motion. The Army of the Elbe, numbering 46,000 men, stood on the left bank of that river facing Saxony. The First Army, under Prince Frederick Charles, consisting of the II<sup>nd</sup>, III<sup>rd</sup> and IV<sup>th</sup> Corps, continued the line eastward along the Saxon frontier as far as Görlitz ; its strength was approximately 93,000 men. The Second Army, led by the Crown Prince, had closed to its left owing to uneasiness caused by the discovery that the Austrians were concentrating in Moravia, and was now about Neisse in Silesia. It numbered in all 115,000 men, and was made up of the I<sup>st</sup>, V<sup>th</sup>, VI<sup>th</sup> Corps, a cavalry division, and—later—the Guard Corps. Including a reserve the three armies totalled 278,000 men. The movement of the Crown Prince had again extended the Prussian front, and the Prussian Army was now disposed into two groups, the union of which was a paramount necessity. In these circumstances the first stage of the campaign was to be the occupation of Saxony by the Army of the Elbe, which was accomplished by the 18th June, the Saxons falling back to unite with the Austrians according to plan. The next step was to be the invasion of Bohemia by the whole army and the union of the two wings on enemy soil.

The three separate armies now definitely became two groups, for the Army of the Elbe was attached to the First Army and its commander was placed under the orders of Prince Frederick Charles. On the 22nd June the telegram which was to affect the whole course of the campaign was sent by Moltke from his desk at Berlin. It was to the effect that both groups were to enter Bohemia and to endeavour to

unite about Gitschin. This was immediately followed by telegraphic instructions to the Crown Prince to the effect that, while the union of the Prussian armies for the decisive battle was to be the end aimed at, the commander of each army, from the moment that he faced the enemy, was to employ the troops entrusted to him according to his own judgment of the requirements of the situation. The contents of the telegram were repeated to Prince Frederick Charles, with the additional important instruction that as the weaker Second Army had the more difficult task of issuing from the mountains, the First Army, so soon as its junction with the Army of the Elbe was affected, was to shorten the crisis by its swift advance.

To turn now to the Austrians, the bulk of their forces had been assembling round the fortress of Olmütz with a strength of six corps and four cavalry divisions, the operation being covered by the 1st Corps, a cavalry division and the Saxons, all of whom were to fall back, before superior opposition, upon the main body. The Austrian Commander-in-Chief was von Benedek, who was at this time sixty-six years of age. A soldier with a brilliant and well-deserved reputation and considerable experience of war, he lacked, however, the decision of conduct and fearlessness in acceptance of responsibility which stamp a really great commander. So conscious was he of his defects that he had begged the Emperor to release him from the duty of taking over the supreme command, and had been genuinely distressed when the Emperor refused on the ground that Austria had no better general. Amongst the rank and file the popularity of von Benedek was immense, but he was handicapped in his office by the action of the higher military

authorities who disliked intensely having to serve under a Protestant of middle-class origin.

Although Austria had got a start from Prussia in mobilization no advantage was taken of the circumstance. Like her rival, Austria was extremely anxious to pose in the eyes of Europe as the injured party, and accordingly it was decided to remain for the moment in the neighbourhood of the fortress of Olmütz. Becoming uneasy, however, at reports of Prussian activity Benedek determined to move his army northward, and on the 17th June he issued orders for an advance to Josefstadt. He had now an opportunity of taking advantage of the separation of the Prussian Army into two wings, and might, conceivably, from his central position, have struck right and left at the converging Prussian columns. But the project necessitated a vigour and promptness foreign to Benedek's nature, and the staff arrangements required a perfection of intelligence arrangements, a thoroughness and grasp of detail, and a power of co-ordination beyond the Austrian Higher Command. As a result Benedek failed to take the appropriate measures for holding off the Prussians on either flank while he engaged *à fond* upon the other ; his advance to Josefstadt so far from enabling him to exploit the advantages of interior against exterior lines was merely to place him in a position where he might easily find himself between two fires, and become the victim of envelopment.

Opposed by such a feeble opponent Moltke was enabled to proceed methodically with the task of effecting the union of the two widely separated wings of his army. The operation, indeed, took longer than Moltke had expected, for although he had hoped that the First Army and the Army of the Elbe would be at

the rendezvous on the 25th, it was not until the 29th that Gitschin was reached by them, the delay being caused mainly by the slowness of Prince Frederick Charles in following up his initial victories against the Austrian 1st Corps and the Saxons. As for the Prussian left wing, formed by the Crown Prince's Army, it began its dangerous passage of the mountains on the evening of the 26th. On that day Benedek's proposed concentration round Josefstadt was far from complete. His main army was still straggling over forty miles of country, and though he was sufficiently accurately informed about the movements of the Prussian Second Army he contented himself with sending two corps and a cavalry division to oppose it. Three roads were used by the Crown Prince and opposition was encountered by the columns on debouching by the northern and southern routes. The column advancing by the former was the 1st Corps under General von Bonin ; on emerging at the western exit of the pass it was sharply attacked, and after a long and severe fight the day began to go against the Prussians. Retreat set in, and after a night march the 1st Corps was back over the frontier in an exhausted condition. The disaster was, however, counteracted by the victory won by the southern column under General von Steinmetz at Nachod. Here the needle gun did terrible execution, and the Austrians were forced to retreat, followed up by the fiery Steinmetz, with the result that not only were other Prussian victories secured, but the way was now opened for the advance of the unfortunate 1st Corps. On the 30th June cavalry patrols sent from that corps of the Crown Prince's Army met similar units exploring eastwards from the Army of Prince Frederick Charles, now at Gitschin. Touch between the Prussian First and

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Second Armies had now been gained, and Moltke felt that his presence in the field was required for the manipulation of the decisive stroke. Accordingly on June 30th the King and General Headquarters entrained at Berlin for the front.

During the morning of July 2nd the Prussian General Headquarters moved to Gitschin and the King of Prussia assumed supreme command of the troops. With him were Bismarck, Moltke and Roon. By this time a somewhat disconcerting circumstance had arisen. The whole Austrian Army had disappeared, and Moltke had first to diagnose what Benedek was most likely to have done. Knowing well the danger for a great army of being forced into a battle with an unfordable river in rear Moltke concluded that Benedek would elect to hold the left bank of the Elbe—which here flows in a north to south direction—between the fortified towns of Josefstadt and Königgrätz, with his right thrown back and covered by the lower waters of the Aupa and Mettau. Moltke's proposal how to deal with such a hypothetical situation, and the orders which he issued, were, however, not destined to be put to the test. Benedek was not behind the Elbe ; he was on Moltke's side of it, and indeed his outposts were but a few miles from those of the Prussians. But so badly was the service of information carried out on both sides that for hours neither side suspected the nearness of the other.

It was late at night before the new and unexpected situation was revealed to Moltke. At half-past ten the various staff officers of General Headquarters at Gitschin had dispersed and the King of Prussia was retiring for the night, when a staff officer of the army of Prince Frederick Charles was announced. It was General Voigts-Rhetz with news of import for his



sovereign. He came to announce the result of reconnaissances which had been made during the day by the First Army, and to ask for the sanction and approval of the King, as commander-in-chief, for the Prince's plan of action for the morrow. The reconnaissances had made it clear that the ground between Bistritz and Elbe was swarming with Austrian troops; and Prince Frederick Charles had decided to attack next day. He had actually issued the necessary orders, and had sent a message to his cousin the Crown Prince asking him to co-operate. At first, King William could scarcely credit the report that Benedek had drawn up his whole army upon the banks of the Bistritz, but he saw at once that with the Elbe in rear the position of the Austrians in case of a reverse would be extremely serious for them. He accordingly directed Voigts-Rhetz to make his way across the market square to the billet of von Moltke, and to explain the situation fully and at once to the Chief of the Staff. "If," he said, "General von Moltke is of opinion that any new steps ought to be taken, you can apply to me to-night for the necessary orders. You will find me ready at any hour."

It was now 11 o'clock, and Moltke was asleep, but the important news brooked no delay. From the detailed explanation given by Voigts-Rhetz, it was clear that the reports brought in by the patrols from the First Army could be implicitly relied upon, and Moltke accepted the view that Benedek had at last hardened his heart and was about to advance to the attack. But he saw at once that the plan of Prince Frederick Charles was not the plan from which the decisive result could, in the newly revealed situation, be achieved. Although Voigts-Rhetz pointed out that the Prince had asked his cousin to observe Josef-



stadt, and to protect the left of the First Army, Moltke realized that Prince Frederick Charles was not sufficiently strong to attack the whole Austrian Army should it be found concentrated and in position, still less so should he be anticipated by an offensive launched at last by the Austrian commander-in-chief. And as regards the co-operation between the First and Second Armies arranged for by Prince Frederick Charles, that commander could only request assistance ; he could not order it, and the assistance might, therefore, be wanting at the critical moment.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, then, if victory were to be achieved, every man must be thrown into the struggle ; the battle must be co-ordinated from General Headquarters ; and the Second Army must be employed offensively and *à fond* against the enemy's right flank.

There were, however, several factors which could not be lightly set aside. The Crown Prince's headquarters were twenty miles away. It was now near midnight ; telegraphic communication was severed ; and instructions sent by a mounted officer could hardly reach the Second Army before 4 a.m. Then the state of the ground, owing to the rains, made marching difficult, and some of the troops would have to march five or six hours to reach the Austrian right flank. It was doubtful, therefore, if the whole of the Crown Prince's Army could be brought up in time to take part in the fight. And if it did not arrive in time, and if Benedek's eight corps were found behind the Bistritz, the Prussians under Prince Frederick Charles would be hard put to it to make a stand. Everything

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact when the letter from Prince Frederick Charles reached Second Army Headquarters the Crown Prince had retired for the night, and the Chief of Staff of the army was temporarily absent. The letter remained unopened until the arrival of the latter, and the assistance requested was then refused.

depended, therefore, upon whether Benedek had the whole or only part of his army in position between the Bistritz and the Elbe, and whether the Crown Prince could come up in time or not.

After a rapid calculation as to the advantages and disadvantages of postponing the attack Moltke came to the conclusion that the risk of the uncertainty of the arrival of the Crown Prince should be run, and as Chief of the Staff he felt that his clear duty was so to advise the King. He went at once to the King's billet, which was on the market-place opposite, was immediately admitted and found the King quite alone, and lying on his camp bed. It needed but a few words to describe the favourable nature of the situation, provided that full advantage were taken of it before the Austrians continued their retreat behind the Elbe. King William immediately decided to attack the enemy early in the morning of July 3rd from all sides. The arrangements already made by Prince Frederick Charles perfectly corresponded with this plan, and the only thing was to secure the co-operation of the Crown Prince who now stood right on the enemy's flank, but almost a day's march from it. The necessary orders were therefore immediately drafted, and by midnight were sent off in duplicate by two separate routes to Königinhof, and Prince Frederick Charles was apprised by the returning General von Voigts-Rhetz of the resolution taken.

The order to the Second Army was to the effect that the Crown Prince was immediately to make the necessary arrangements for advancing to support the attack to be made by the First Army. After a thrilling journey the mounted officer conveying the order reached Königinhof, the Crown Prince's headquarters, at 4 a.m. on the 3rd July.

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The orders of Prince Frederick Charles, which were allowed by von Moltke to stand, were to the effect that his own First Army should deliver a frontal attack with its six divisions, while the Army of the Elbe, which was also under his orders, was to fall upon the Austrian left flank. As for the co-operation of the Second Army of the Crown Prince, which Moltke had specifically ordered, even the VIth Corps which was nearest to the Austrian right could hardly hope to make its intervention felt until midday and the rest must be some time later. In the most favourable conditions, therefore, the First Army would be without support for seven hours—for Prince Frederick Charles had decided to attack at dawn—and the situation of the First Army commander would be not unlike that of the Duke of Wellington during the forenoon of Waterloo.

The issue of the battle would obviously depend upon the timely and effective assistance of the Crown Prince, and Moltke had to accept the risk that his orders might not reach the Crown Prince or that the bearers of them might be seriously delayed. Fate and the Austrian commander-in-chief, however, played into his hands. Whereas Benedek might have effected much by a vigorous policy of attack his only idea was to await the advance of the foe, thus allowing himself to be gripped in the vice which was closing round him. By the morning of the battle Benedek had, indeed, sunk into a state of complete despondency. On the 30th June he had announced in a telegram to the Emperor that a retreat towards Königgrätz had been forced upon him by the *débâcle* of the 1st Corps and Saxons who had been driven out of Gitschin by Prince Frederick Charles, and on the same day he had written to his wife in a strain which showed that he regarded

all as lost. It was while its commander-in-chief was thus a prey to intense dejection that the Austrian Army had fallen back from the neighbourhood of Josefstadt, and during the 2nd it was disposed facing generally west between the Bistritz and the Elbe. Benedek, however, was still a prey to dismal forebodings, and during the forenoon he telegraphed to the Emperor begging him to make peace at any price as "disaster is inevitable." Gradually in the absence of any sign of the enemy his confidence returned in some measure and orders were issued to the effect that an attack might be looked for on the morrow and that the troops were to hold their ground. Benedek's army, about 210,000 strong including some 24,000 cavalry and 770 guns, now stood at bay, and the disposition of the various portions of it was to be as follows. The left was to be held by the 8th Corps and the Saxons, with detachments thrown forward to the Bistritz at Nechanitz and Lubno. In the centre were to be the 3rd and 10th Corps with outposts as far as the Bistritz and the main masses holding the main road through Sadowa to Königgrätz, from both of which places—the former a small village and the latter a fortress—the battle takes its name. The right was to be formed by the 4th and 2nd Corps, and in rear were the 1st Corps, the 6th Corps and the bulk of the cavalry. Such was the proposed disposition, which as a matter of fact was not completed when the Prussians attacked.

The Austrian Army occupied, generally speaking, a rough semicircle with both flanks resting on the Elbe, which river was about four miles in rear of the centre of their line. The position was in many ways a good one: the field of fire was generally adequate and the various folds in the ground facilitated the movements

of reserves. The disadvantage of fighting with a large river close in rear was lessened by the fact that several additional bridges had been constructed by the Austrian engineers, and that the Elbe is here commanded by the guns of the fortress of Königgrätz. Much had been done also to strengthen artificially the natural advantages of the ground; shelter trenches and gun pits had been extensively dug, and in many places there were obstacles in the shape of felled trees. Further, Benedek's flanks were protected by the Trotina and the Bistritz, two streams which, swollen by the recent rains, had gained considerably in protective value. But in spite of the natural advantages of the terrain the Austrian Army was at a serious disadvantage. Although the danger to be apprehended from the Prussian Second Army must have been obvious no account was taken of the peril in Benedek's orders, and the cavalry, instead of being employed as a mobile force for the purpose of securing the flanks, and of acting particularly against the advance of the Prussian Crown Prince, was collected uselessly behind the centre.

The day which was to decide the long rivalry between Austria and Prussia was ushered in by a wild and rainy dawn, and thick mist and driving rain delayed the First Army and the Army of the Elbe in their preliminary movements. Prince Frederick Charles during the night moved from Kamenitz to Milowitz, and here shortly after five o'clock word was received from the Army of the Elbe that it hoped to reach the crossing over the Bistritz at Nechanitz between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. It was now obvious that the battle, so far as the attack by the Prussians was concerned, would take the form of a gradually increasing pressure which would not reach its maximum until the afternoon.



The initial pressure could be made at once by Prince Frederick Charles, the bulk of whose columns were concentrated behind the hill of Dub—but with one division, the 7th, on the far side of the Bistritz at Cerekwitz ; next would come the pressure to be exerted by the Army of the Elbe against the Austrian left ; while early in the afternoon—all being well and provided that the orders had actually reached the Crown Prince—the Second Army might be expected to intervene in the same manner and with the same effect as the Prussians at Waterloo.

If success were to be won it would be by the nice co-ordination of this sequence of attacks, and the task immediately before Prince Frederick Charles was a delicate one. It was absolutely necessary to hold the Austrian Army on the Bistritz, but at the same time it was important that the Prussian First Army should not be committed too closely lest it might be worn down by the superior strength of the Austrians before the other and flank attacks could come into play. In other words, while it was the duty of the army of Prince Frederick Charles to pin the enemy to the ground in order that the double flank attack which had been concerted might be put into execution, it was not advisable to make an out-and-out onslaught on the Austrians. Something in the nature of a compromise was required, and in the circumstances Prince Frederick Charles decided that his soundest policy was to drive in the Austrian outposts and to establish himself firmly on the right or near bank of the Bistritz. By this means the Austrians might be sufficiently engaged to prevent them being able to devote much attention to their flanks, while at the same time the Prussian First Army would be enabled to husband its strength for the combined movement later on.



By six o'clock the whole of the First Army was close up to Dub, hidden from view by the ridge topped by the village of that name. The orders issued by Prince Frederick Charles were to the following effect. The 8th Division was to advance north of the high road towards Sadowa. Abreast of the 8th, but south of the high road, were to be the 4th and 3rd Divisions in the order named. The 5th and 6th Divisions were to follow the 8th. The right flank was to be covered by the cavalry corps which was also to keep touch with the Army of the Elbe. On the other flank a brigade of cavalry was to maintain connection with the 7th Division at Cerekwitz on the other side of the Bistritz. The orders to this division were that it was to advance "so soon as the action commenced at Sadowa and to join in as circumstances might demand." Such instructions had an element of vagueness, but a vagueness which was in the circumstances unavoidable. Prince Frederick Charles doubtless felt that General von Fransecky, the divisional commander, could be trusted to exercise his discretion and to interpret his instructions in the spirit rather than the letter. The confidence reposed by the army commander in his subordinate was fully justified; nevertheless the action of the latter was to exercise an important and unexpected influence on the course of the battle.

Soon after 6 a.m. the three divisions of the front line of the Prussian First Army moved up to the crest of the ridge overlooking the Bistritz and deployed for attack. Meanwhile Prince Frederick Charles had pushed forward some of his cavalry and horse artillery which trotted down the greasy slope towards the river. It was now about half-past seven o'clock, and so soon as the Uhlans had reached the vicinity of the bridge Austrian guns from a battery near Sadowa

opened upon them and the battle of Königgrätz had begun.

Almost at the same moment the advanced-guard of the Prussian 8th Division came into collision with the Austrian outposts in Sadowa; but, as it was the intention of Prince Frederick Charles not to commit himself too deeply for the present, the battle developed into an artillery duel in which the Austrians had rather the advantage. Now, however, before the action had been long in progress his hand was forced by the action of the commander of the 7th Division. Hearing the sound of the guns General von Fransecky naturally issued orders for an advance, and launched his division to the attack of the village of Benatek, which was captured without much difficulty. Considering then how best "to join in as circumstances might demand" he decided to assist the 8th Division by an advance against the Swiep Wald. This wood was really the strongest point in the whole Austrian position. With a length of some two thousand paces from east to west and with a depth of over a thousand yards it dominated the whole neighbouring terrain, attaining at its highest point an elevation of 900 feet, or more than 300 feet above the valley of the Bistritz. The advance of the Prussian 7th Division had the effect of drawing Austrian reinforcements towards the Swiep Wald, and soon the whole Austrian right wing, consisting of the 4th and 2nd Corps, was in action against the solitary division of the Prussians. That division now found itself committed to an isolated and bitter struggle against overwhelming odds and exposed to a murderous artillery fire.

Meanwhile, a little before eight o'clock, the King of Prussia had arrived upon the battlefield, where he was received with a loud burst of cheering by his troops,

and a few moments later, accompanied by Moltke, Bismarck and other notables, His Majesty moved forward to the Hill of Dub facing Sadowa, where Prince Frederick Charles reported and explained the existing situation. This, indeed, could be grasped without much difficulty, for the dominating feature of the battle, so far as it was visible from the Hill of Dub, was that the bulk of the First Army was still on the hitherside of the Bistritz, while, on the other side, and in view of the watchers, the 7th Division was in grave danger of annihilation. To take the pressure off that division, and indeed to save it from destruction, King William ordered that the First Army should immediately cross the Bistritz and deliver an attack along the whole line. The passage of the river was carried out by the 8th, 4th and 3rd Divisions successfully, but the two latter were compelled to leave their artillery behind for the moment on the right bank. The advance over the Bistritz was not obstinately contested, and by eleven o'clock the 8th Division of Prussian infantry was in possession of the village of Sadowa, while the 4th and 3rd had also gained some hamlets on the left bank south of the 8th. That division was now sent against the wood which borders the main Sadowa road, while the 3rd and 4th attempted to bear up towards Lipa so as to take the wood in flank. Against the concealed Austrians the Prussian needle guns made little impression, and an Austrian battery firing from within the wood told upon the attackers with terrible effect. The Prussian 8th Division, however, fought on and, tearing away the obstacles at the edge of the copse, dashed in. Severe fighting ensued from tree to tree between the men of the Prussian division and the Austrian defenders, but although half the wood was soon in Prussian hands the

fire of the Austrian battery took a heavy toll of the victors. Here the fight became stationary, the Prussians being unable to push along the main road or to force their way through the trees to attack the Austrian battery.

Thus by 11 a.m. the position of the Prussian First Army was exceedingly serious. It was maintaining the contest unaided, for the Crown Prince was still far from the field, and the Army of the Elbe had as yet hardly made itself felt against the Austrian left ; and the attempt to relieve the pressure on the 7th Division had resulted merely in exposing three other divisions to a terrific artillery fire to which they were unable to make an adequate reply. Only forty-two Prussian pieces were across the Bistritz, and these were far too few to engage the line of two hundred Austrian guns which were splendidly served by the enemy. Eighty of the Prussian guns still remained on the right bank of the Bistritz owing to the difficulty of finding suitable positions for them over the river, and the difficulty of contending with the Austrian artillery was increased by a deficiency of ammunition on the Prussian side. The Bistritz had few bridges and fewer fords, and such batteries as were in action were unable to maintain adequate communication with their ammunition columns. In these circumstances the Prussian 8th, 4th and 3rd Divisions suffered heavy losses. As for the 7th Division its position was desperate. With fourteen battalions and twenty-four guns Fransecky had been engaged with the greater part of two enemy corps and over a hundred pieces of artillery. The centre of the Prussian division had just broken under the pressure of ever-increasing forces, and the wings, gradually becoming isolated, were on the verge of being surrounded.

Towards noon Prince Frederick Charles realized that the moment had come when he must throw his reserves across the river, and the 5th and 6th Divisions accordingly advanced over the Bistritz with a view to offensive action. But even now the moment for a general advance by the First Army had not arrived ; all that the Prince could do was to hold the centre and await the action of the two armies on his flank. Even this task was difficult of accomplishment. In the artillery duel which still went on the Austrians were at an advantage. Their guns were posted on terraces which gave them almost absolute command of the valley, and were worked with a precision and energy which foiled every attempt of the Prussian First Army to work upwards from the villages and sodden meadows on the Bistritz.

On the Hill of Dub the gravity of the situation was realized by the King and his entourage, and many and anxious were the looks directed towards the north-east for some sign which would announce the anxiously awaited appearance of the Crown Prince's Army. Bismarck, especially, was a prey to a regular paroxysm of nervous tension, but his confidence was to a great extent restored by an incident trivial in itself, but revealing the imperturbability of the Chief of the Staff. To soothe his nerves Bismarck smoked incessantly, and on one occasion hastily thrust his case in which were cigars of various brands into Moltke's hand. The coolness with which the latter made a careful selection showed clearly that the day was not yet lost. The King, however, was infected with the general uneasiness and addressed an earnest question to his adviser upon the condition of affairs. Moltke's reply was characteristic : " Your Majesty will win to-day not only a battle but a campaign."



Beyond the wooded Swiep Wald, where the 7th Division was so seriously engaged, there stood out sharply marked against the horizon a hill crowned by two lofty trees. It was the hill of Horenowes, towards which the Headquarters Staff had long and anxiously been gazing. Now, shortly after 11 o'clock, there rose from it the white smoke of a battery in action. The guns could not be other than Austrian pieces. And as the hill was not being attacked by the Prussian First Army, the fire could be directed only against the Second, and it seemed clear that the long-awaited flank attack was about to make itself felt. In the opposite direction, too, the smoke revealed the progress of the advance of the Army of the Elbe from Nechanitz against the enemy's left wing. Thus the morning wore away, but the afternoon was two hours spent before the danger of a Prussian defeat had been removed. Matters looked gravest between one and two o'clock, but about the latter hour flashes were seen from the guns firing on the hill of Horenowes, showing that they were firing in the direction of the watchers, and must, therefore, no longer be Austrian artillery, but guns from the Prussian Second Army in action against the Austrians. The arrival of the infantry was difficult to detect, for no dust was raised owing to the dampness of the ground, and in the misty weather the telescopes which were brought to bear in the direction indicated were powerless to define the objects. All doubt was soon set at rest by the arrival of an officer with news of the approach, after a forced march, of the foremost portion of the army of the Crown Prince.

To turn now to the Crown Prince's army which had intervened at the critical moment, the orders from von Moltke prescribing its task had been received at the Crown Prince's headquarters about 4 a.m. This



time His Royal Highness was awakened, and an hour later the necessary instructions for the various corps had been drawn up and were being despatched. The VIth Corps had been previously detailed for a reconnaissance on the right bank of the Elbe towards Josefstadt and was already in motion and partially across the river when the Crown Prince's orders were received, a fortunate circumstance which had an important bearing on the subsequent operations. Nevertheless, owing to the breakdown of all the telegraphic arrangements the orders were long in circulating to the units of the Second Army, with the result that by eight o'clock, four hours after Moltke's order had been received, only a portion of the army was on the right bank of the Elbe and these had been so situated the evening before. The units across the river were the Ist Corps far away at Praussnitz on the extreme right, the 12th Division of the VIth Corps near Jaromir on the left, and the advanced-guard of the Guard Corps in the centre at Daubrawitz.

The advanced brigade of the Guards was commanded by General von Alvensleben, a leader of rare determination, a quality he was further to display in a later war and in the next battle to be described in this volume. From his bivouac he had heard the guns in action along the Bistritz, and without waiting for orders he set his troops in motion due south with the village of Jericek as their goal, at the same time sending word to the commander of the 7th Division that he would be at that village by half-past eleven. In spite of the difficulties caused by the heavy state of the roads the brigade pushed on so fast that it was ahead of the scheduled time, and before half-past eleven five batteries of the Guards came into action against an Austrian battery and compelled it to quit

its position between Horenowes and Benatek. Meanwhile, on the left of the Second Army the Prussian VIth Corps had also been straining every nerve to reach the field, a portion of the 11th Division, to save time, wading breast deep through the Trotina instead of waiting its turn to cross by the existing bridge. The division arrived at the high ground north of Racitz shortly after eleven o'clock, at which hour the other division—the 12th—of the VIth Corps was near the Horicka Berg east of the Trotina. The march over the sandy soil, made sodden by the recent rains, and through the marshy ground on the banks of the Trotina had been exhausting in the extreme, especially for the artillery horses, many of which dropped dead in the traces. Little opposition, however, was encountered. Meanwhile the Crown Prince, who had stayed at Königinhof to watch the 1st Division of Guards cross the Elbe, had ridden forward close behind Alvensleben's brigade. Little or nothing could now be seen of the progress of the battle. The view was restricted by the mist, the smoke of the burning villages and by the canopy which hung over the guns in action on both sides. Soon, however, the fog cleared away slightly and the tree-crowned hill of Horenowes stood out clearly three miles away, and from the volume of artillery fire in the direction of Benatek the Crown Prince realized that the 7th Division must be in difficulties. Orders were accordingly issued for the Guards and the VIth Corps to make at once a converging attack against the hill of Horenowes, and by noon the Prussian Second Army had attained the following position : General von Alvensleben's brigade of Guards was advancing from Wrchowitz against Horenowes. Of the VIth Corps the 11th Division had carried Racitz, while its sister division, the 12th, was advancing

from the Horicka Berg to pass the lower Trotina. The two corps had forty-eight guns in action.

Fortunately for the Prussians the Austrians in this quarter of the field were caught at a serious disadvantage. The attack which had been made by the Prussian 7th Division against the Swiep Wald had had the effect of attracting troops from the Austrian right, with the result that only one corps was left to oppose the onslaught of the Prussian Second Army, and it was while they were endeavouring to readjust their right flank that the Austrians had to deal with the advance of the Crown Prince. In quick succession the village and heights of Horenowes, Racitz, Trotina and Sendrasitz fell into the hands of the Prussians, and by two o'clock the last of the Austrians had been driven from Maslowed. A gap had now been formed in Benedek's line through which poured the 1st Guard Division of the Prussians. The church tower of Chlum which forms the highest landmark in the field was taken as the new point of direction, and the village of Chlum which formed the key of the whole Austrian position was seized.

Just before three o'clock an aide-de-camp galloped up to Benedek, who was between Chlum and Lipa, with the news that the former village was occupied by the Prussians. The Austrian commander-in-chief could not credit the startling news and rode off to ascertain its truth, but the withering volley which told with severe effect upon his staff left him in no doubt. Just about this time an equally disquieting report was brought him about the state of affairs on his other flank. The Army of the Elbe—after a long delay caused by the passage of the river at Nechanitz—was pressing hard against the Austrian left and had taken Probus.

So soon as Chlum had been captured three battalions of the Prussian Guards pushed still further on and occupied Rosberitz, thus driving a wedge into the very heart of the defence and incidentally seriously threatening the main Austrian line of retreat by the main Sadowa-Königgrätz road. The Austrians, however, counter-attacked with vigour and the position of the Prussian Guards became extremely critical. Rosberitz was retaken and the Prussian battalions, fighting desperately, were driven back on Chlum. Meanwhile the reserve artillery of the Guard had come up and smote heavily the Austrian masses who were preparing to attack the village. Three times the Austrians attacked, twice they almost reached the orchard and the churchyard, but were received at a few paces distance by such a volley from the Prussian needle guns that nearly the whole of the attacking force was killed or wounded. A third time the attack was renewed, but now the 2nd Guard Division was beginning to arrive and the effort of the Austrians was repulsed. The Prussian Second Army was at length making its whole power felt ; the 1st and Vth Corps and the cavalry were pressing up towards Chlum bringing a reserve of 50,000 fresh Prussian troops to the field. Chlum was saved to the Prussians, and although the fighting raged for some time fiercely round Rosberitz that village had to be abandoned by the Austrians.

Thus about three o'clock to the watchers on the Hill of Dub a perceptible slackening of the Austrian fire afforded a significant indication of the change which had come over the battle. The Prussian infantry could be seen about Chlum and it was clear that the day was definitely going in Prussia's favour. In these circumstances King William decided that the time had

come to order a general advance of the First Army. The order was given about half-past three o'clock, and with loud cheers and drums beating the battalions of Prince Frederick Charles went dashing up the slope which rises from the Bistritz. The end was now very near and was delayed only by the splendid devotion of the Austrian artillery and a succession of desultory but desperately contested cavalry charges. By 4.30 p.m. the whole Austrian army right, left and centre was in full retreat, but a retreat which never degenerated into a rout and in which every arm of the defeated force preserved a soldierly resolution even in disaster. Less than two hours later the wings of the victorious Prussian Army closing in upon the centre had met upon the main road which traverses the battlefield, not far from Königgrätz. The battle was at an end and at half-past six Moltke was issuing his orders for a day of rest to be observed on the morrow.

About eight o'clock the Crown Prince, attended by a small remnant of his staff, which had been gradually diminished by the despatch of orders and by the weariness of the horses which were no longer capable of moving out of a walk, encountered the Royal Headquarters in a meadow between Probus and Langenhof. There an affecting interview between the old king and his son took place. King William, with deep emotion, thanked the Crown Prince for the efforts he had made, and holding out the Cross of Merit thrust it into the Prince's hands with the words, "Take it, for thou hast deserved it." The Crown Prince presented to the King his Chief of Staff and Quartermaster-General and the two staffs mingled in mutual congratulation. The ground on which the meeting took place was strewn with dead and wounded, a declining sun shed its rays full on the group, while far away towards



Königgrätz and the great southern high road was heard the distant roar of the Austrian artillery, which, whatever its misfortunes and losses may have been, had won on that day the admiration and respect of all who were exposed to its fire.

Prussia had paid dearly for her victory, for her losses amounted to 359 officers and nearly 9,000 other ranks, but these figures were insignificant when set side by side with those of her opponent. The Austrians had 5,600 killed, 7,600 wounded and had lost as prisoners nearly 20,000, of whom more than half were unwounded. The casualties of the Saxons exceeded 1,500, and the Austrians had lost five colours and 160 guns. So completely, indeed, did Austria realize the magnitude of her disaster that an emissary was sent to Prussian Headquarters next day to seek for a suspension of hostilities as a preliminary to peace. To this request Prussia was unable to accede until her ally Italy had been consulted; nevertheless, after Königgrätz the war was virtually over. In spite of a snatch victory of the Hanoverians over a weak Prussian Army and of two brilliant successes by the Austrians against the Italians by land and sea, the smashing blow at Königgrätz left Austria for the moment prostrate. One despairing effort was made to save Vienna, but though the Austrians succeeded in frustrating the Prussian attempt to interpose between their divided forces the campaign died away in anti-climax, and the preliminaries of peace were signed on July 26th. Less than a month later by the Treaty of Prag the war, which from the first hostile act to the formal conclusion had filled merely seventy-five days and in which the actual campaign was confined to seven weeks, was definitely ended.

The claim of Königgrätz to be regarded as a decisive



battle of the world is borne out by the articles of the Treaty of Prag; for although the influence of Napoleon III prevented Prussia from reaping what might have been thought to be her due reward—the hegemony of the whole of Germany—nevertheless, the guerdon of the victor was a rich one. Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, Nassau and the town of Frankfort were annexed, by which a population of over four millions was added to Prussia, and a continuous territory was now hers. Germany, north of the Main, together with Saxony, was to be included in a federation under Prussian leadership, and the States of South Germany had the right reserved for them of entering into some kind of bond with the Northern Confederation. Nor was this all. Austria was to withdraw completely from German affairs. Thus the long rivalry between Prussia and Austria was now definitely decided in the former's favour; the Habsburgs had to retire in favour of the Hohenzollerns; and Prussian blood and iron were to dominate the Continent for over fifty years.

## MARS-LA-TOUR<sup>1</sup>

16TH AUGUST, 1870

SEE MAPS 4 AND 5

Certaines grandes batailles décident d'une lutte entre des États sans bouleverser le monde : d'autres, en raison de leurs conséquences oppressives pour les peuples et les individus, deviennent des catastrophes universelles : la bataille de Rezonville est de celles-là . . . La bataille de Rezonville, comme celle de Waterloo, est de ces événements qui modifient sur presque toute la surface du globe les conditions de la vie humaine.—GERMAIN BAPST.

UNTIL Prussia stood forth to dazzle Europe with her shining armour of 1866 France had long been regarded as the leading military Power on the Continent. In almost all the varied aspects of the art of war her authority was supreme. Her military literature exercised a profound influence. French military terms had become an almost indispensable feature of military technique. French uniforms set the fashion in the military world outside. As the military instructor of aspiring or decadent nations France was always in request, though here Turkey was a conspicuous exception, for the skill of a young Prussian captain, Helmuth von Moltke by name, had, a generation earlier, prejudiced the Porte in favour of Prussian methods. The deference paid to France in military matters was not, however, merely the homage paid to tradition. She could show recent

<sup>1</sup> The battle described in this chapter is known in Germany as "The Battle of Vionville—Mars-la-Tour." The French call it "The Battle of Rezonville." In England it is usually known as "Mars-la-Tour," and that title is adhered to here.

examples of her prowess as a guarantee of her efficiency. The Crimea and Italy had proved her of the first military rank, and the experience gained in those wars, together with the campaigns in Mexico and China, had established a great and deserved confidence in the French Army. In Prussia particularly the victories of the French Army over the Austrians at Magenta and Solferino in 1859 had made a profound impression. Its superiority was freely admitted and to some it appeared that the time had come to imitate the army of Napoleon III even in the most superficial details. To the growth of these opinions, however, Prince Frederick Charles of Prussia offered the most strenuous resistance. He perceived the danger that lay in this widespread belief as to the invincibility of the French, and resisted it with all his power. In the winter of 1859-60 he read a paper to the officers of the Stettin garrison on the French method of fighting and how to cope with it; and this refusal to acknowledge the invincibility of the French Army caused a great sensation even in France.

Nevertheless, in the middle of the nineteenth century France was showing her greatness in every quarter of the globe, and her North African wars seemed to mark her out as the successor to Ancient Rome. These world-wide successes gained with a Napoleon on the throne revived the Napoleonic legend and inspired every Frenchman with a profound belief in the greatness of his country. Even those who distrusted or disliked the Emperor had other memories from which to draw inspiration. If those who believed in the Napoleonic legend could point to the success of the present and the memories of the great Napoleon's campaigns, the republican could call to mind the triumphs of Valmy and Northern Italy, while the

royalist could retort with the France of but a few generations earlier when her military glory had been at its height—the days “when she had forced the Castilian to yield her precedence and had summoned Italian princes to prostrate themselves at her footstool.” In a word, in the years immediately preceding 1866 the military greatness of France was almost a dogma amongst all classes.

The reputation of Napoleon III had grown apace, and was perhaps at its height at the end of the first ten years of his reign. His victories had flattered the military pride of France. The flowing tide of commercial prosperity bore witness to the efficiency of the Government. The reconstruction of Paris by the genius of Haussmann dazzled a generation accustomed to the mean capitals of the '50's. In the Catholic world the Emperor enjoyed the prestige accruing to the protector of the Pope and to his own position as the “eldest son of the Church.” But when the splendid zenith had been reached the sun of the Second Empire declined quickly to its setting. After 1862 the mistakes of Napoleon III worked to his undoing, and dimmed the glory of France. The wholly ineffective protest made by him on behalf of the Poles alienated Russia. His inaction during the Danish War of 1864 weakened his reputation. Greater still was the loss of prestige due to the mistake of 1863 when he plunged into Mexican politics. The unwise project of founding a Roman Catholic empire in Central America locked up no small portion of his army overseas at a time when every man and gun was wanted near the Rhine ; and Napoleon “lost face” with his army when he evacuated Mexico and abandoned Maximilian at the peremptory bidding of the United States. But of all his blunders none was greater than his misplaced

sympathy for Prussia. In his dreamy, generous and unpractical way Napoleon III had a real sympathy with nationalism. He had secretly advised Prussia to take both Schleswig and Holstein, justifying his action to his advisers by the statement that if he had fought for the independence of Italy and had lifted up his voice for Polish nationality he could not have any other sentiments in Germany or obey any other principles. These altruistic ideals, however, found no response in the hearts of his countrymen to whom Prussia was the hereditary enemy, and who clung to the doctrine of the natural frontiers furnished by the sea, the Pyrenees, the Alps and the Rhine.

It was upon a France uneasy, disenchanted and resentful that the news of Königgrätz came as a stinging blow. Jealous for her own military reputation France was irritated by the success of the upstart Prussia and a violent outburst of anti-Prussian feeling ensued. To the feelings thus aroused there was added indignation against Napoleon, who proved himself unequal to the task of profiting by the European crisis. Had he displayed a French force on the Rhine and hinted at the possibility of an enforced mediation by arms the self-esteem of the French might have been placated ; but for this the dreamy and indolent nature of the Emperor—rendered still more lethargic by severe physical pain—was not fitted. He allowed himself to be fobbed off by some vague conversations regarding concessions which were soon found to be illusory. When diplomatic feelers were put out by France for compensation—first out of actual German territory, and later in the shape of Belgium or at any rate Luxembourg—they drew no adequate response. Even when they were emphasized by the bellicose oratory of the Chamber of Deputies Bismarck merely

played his trump card—the publication of the hitherto secret military alliances between Prussia and the South German States. France suddenly woke up to the fact that she had been hoodwinked and to the realization of the existence of a United Germany, which she had asserted must be prevented at all hazards.

While the irritation in France was at its height there occurred an incident which was to arouse her to actual frenzy. Since the autumn of 1868 the throne of Spain had been vacant as a result of a revolution which had led to the deposition of Queen Isabella. There was no intention of proclaiming a republic and, after other candidatures had been vainly projected, it occurred to General Prim and his friends to approach Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmarigen with an offer of the crown. The prince was at the time thirty-five years old, a member of a family distantly related to the reigning house of Prussia, and related—but more closely—to the French houses of Murat and Beauharnais. By the latter relationship he was even connected with Napoleon III, for the Prince's mother, Josephine of Baden, had been a daughter of Princess Stéphanie, a near relation of Queen Hortense. Nevertheless, Prince Leopold had strong Prussian ties. His father had been Prime Minister of Prussia in 1859, and one of his younger brothers had fallen fighting in the Prussian Army in the battle of Königgrätz. The candidature of a Hohenzollern for the Spanish throne was not unnaturally interpreted in France as an attempt to connect Prussia politically with Spain; and in the existing state of tension it produced a most violent outburst of feeling in Paris. The *Temps* exclaimed that the Empire of Charles V was being revived, while the *Débats* refused to believe that a scheme so mon-



strous was possible. The Duc de Gramont declared that the interests and honour of France were imperilled, and the French newspapers ostentatiously proclaimed that they were no longer allowed to publish information as to the movements of French troops. France and Prussia were now, in the words of Prevost-Paradol, like two express trains starting from the opposite ends of a single line.

To a week of frenzied excitement there came as an anti-climax the news of the withdrawal by Prince Leopold of his candidature for the throne and all cause of war had apparently been removed. Public opinion in France had, however, got out of hand, and it was determined to show the world how Prussia could be brought to heel. Acting under precise instructions from Paris the French ambassador Benedetti met the King of Prussia on the promenade at Ems on the 13th July, 1870, and made the unexpected request that his Majesty should never again give his support to the candidature of his kinsman should it be revived. This King William felt himself unable to promise; and later, to a request from the ambassador for a further audience, he sent a message to the effect that he had no further communication to make. Though the King had thus refused any further discussion perfect courtesy had been observed on both sides; and on the following morning the King and Benedetti, who were both leaving Ems, took leave of each other at the railway station with the usual marks of respect.

On the evening of the day on which had taken place the interview between the King of Prussia and the French ambassador three of the leading men of Prussia were dining together in Berlin. Bismarck was the host, and his two guests were von Moltke, the Chief of the Staff, and von Roon, the Minister of War. The two

latter were very dejected, for the renunciation of Prince Leopold had been announced the day before, and it seemed as if the Prussian Army would not be called upon to prove its mettle. During the meal, however, there arrived a long cipher telegram from Ems which proved a welcome distraction. From the decoding there gradually emerged a full account of the French ambassador's persistence and of King William's refusal to grant a further audience. The despatch, which was from Abeken to Bismarck, closed with the words, "His Majesty leaves it to your Excellency to decide whether Benedetti's demand and its rejection should be at once communicated to our ambassadors, to foreign nations and the Press."

Of the three men gathered in the room in Bismarck's residence that night each had, ever since Königgrätz, been firmly convinced that a contest with France was merely a matter of time. The two soldiers were convinced that Prussia was a match this time for her hereditary enemy, and the statesman was determined to bring about a decision at the earliest possible moment. New life was, therefore, breathed into the guests as Bismarck seized the opportunity presented to him by his sovereign and set about cutting down the telegram to a summary which, while preserving all the meaning, presented it in a blunt and almost insulting form. It was deliberately intended to be "a red rag to the Gallic bull," and when the amended version was read out it was received with transports of delight by the two soldiers. "If only I can live," cried Moltke, "to lead our armies in this war, then the devil may come as soon after as he likes for my old carcase." Before the meal broke up the abbreviated despatch was on its way all over Europe. A few dozen words were to lead to the downfall of a dynasty and the

humiliation of the leading Power of Europe, and to be the death-warrant of tens of thousands of the sons of two nations.

The publication of Bismarck's version produced the exact effect intended by its author. Germany was beside herself with delight at the affront to the French ambassador, while France was roused to a state of passionate resentment. The publication of the despatch became known in Paris on the 14th. On that day the Council of Ministers met three times. At the first session the advocates of peace still had a majority. In the afternoon it was decided to call out the reserves; yet the Emperor was apparently still inclined for peace. At the third meeting Napoleon gave way to the threats and importunities of the war party and to the reproaches of his ultramontane Empress. The French Government accordingly took immediate steps to safeguard the interests and honour of France, and the formal declaration of war reached Berlin on July the 19th.

It was recognized that if the South German States should throw in their lot with Prussia, France would be at a serious disadvantage as regards numbers. But it was hoped to compensate for the union of the lesser States with Prussia by alliance between France and two other Powers. Efforts had been made to secure Austria and Italy as allies, and negotiations—secret but completely satisfactory up to a certain point—had taken place. Unfortunately, however, for Napoleon III a religious factor had thrust itself into prominence. The very day before the declaration of war the dogma of Papal Infallibility had been decreed. The new Italy clamoured all the louder for the possession of Rome, at the moment garrisoned by French troops. It was a terrible prospect for the eldest son of the Church

whose pontiff had just been invested with an added sanctity, to hand over the very centre of Roman Catholicism to a liberal and anti-papal nation. But there was no escape from the dilemma. Unless Rome were ceded Italy would not budge ; and unless Italy came in Austria was disinclined to move. Napoleon decided to hold the Eternal City, largely it is believed owing to the influence of the vehemently Catholic Eugénie, who is said once to have declared, " better Prussians in Paris than Italian troops in Rome." The French Emperor, however, still continued to hope for the assistance of Italy and Austria ; but before long the unreadiness and impotence of France extinguished in her potential allies any lingering spark of willingness to take up arms in her behalf. The net result was that France found herself alone against a combination of Prussia and the States of South Germany and confronted by a superiority in numbers which was almost overwhelming.

On the other hand, France had certain assets to throw into the scale. Actually she was by sea far more powerful than her rival, and it was not unreasonable to expect that the threat of a possible French landing would lock up some of the Prussian forces along the Baltic coastline. Then, too, the victories of Prussia in 1866 had caused an extensive scheme of army reform to be undertaken in France. The chasse-pôt rifle had been issued, and as a weapon it was far superior to the needle gun both in range and flatness of trajectory. In rapidity of fire it was also a far more efficient rifle than that of Prussia, but unfortunately its superiority in this respect led to a mistaken predilection for defensive tactics which were not in harmony with the natural temperament of the French soldier. Much, too, was expected of the *mitrailleuse*,

a 25-barrelled machine gun, employed in batteries as a field artillery weapon, and destined in practice to fall far short of expectations. As regards a plan of campaign the policy of an instant offensive had been adopted in principle ; and confident to the last that Austria would not fail him the Emperor Napoleon decided to leave merely a thin screen along the Sarre and to carry out his invasion boldly across the Rhine.

It was known in France that Germany could bring half a million men into the field against some 300,000 on the French side, and, even if the adhesion of Austria could be counted on, it would be necessary to counteract the German superiority in numbers by extreme rapidity of movement. To this end Marshal Le Boeuf had obtained permission from the Emperor to introduce a modification into the process of mobilization. He proposed that mobilization proper, that is to say the raising of units from peace to war strength by the reception of reservists, horses and equipment should proceed simultaneously with the concentration of such units at their assigned positions in the theatre of war. In a word, units were to be rushed to the frontier just as they stood, while their quota of men, horses and material required to bring them to war strength were to be hurried after them.

The proposal was accepted. The most frightful confusion ensued. Mobilization broke down completely. No territorial system such as characterized the Prussian military machine existed in France. In the majority of cases the depots were not in the same districts as the regiments which they were supposed to serve. Thus the 85th Infantry Regiment, whose depot was at St. Malo, was itself quartered at Lyons ; while, on the other hand, the regiment whose depot was at Lyons was stationed at Dunkirk. Further,



since the various corps had no territorial basis the reservists were disseminated over the whole of France instead of being located for the most part in the military regions allotted to their corps. Immediately the railways were congested with tens of thousands of reservists, many of them thoroughly out of hand, fruitlessly endeavouring to join their units. There was the case of a reservist of the 4th Zouaves, living in lower Alsace, who reported at Strasburg where his old regiment was in garrison. He was despatched to Marseilles and thence to Northern Africa. A two-days' march brought him to the depot of his unit, where he was equipped. Thence he was sent back to Marseilles and from that port to Strasburg, where he eventually reported himself to his regiment after a journey of well over a thousand miles. An even more characteristic case was that of a detachment of the 53rd Regiment of the Line which left Lille on the 18th July to join the regiment at Belfort. It was not until ten days later, and after five days' march, that the party arrived at Gap. There it was forced to remain a whole month, and on the 30th August it was detained at Lyons, since by that time no one knew the whereabouts of the regiment itself. Ordered then to join one of the units of the new armies the detachment set out for Orleans, becoming engaged for the first time, but even then before it had discovered its new unit. Thus after three months the detachment at last took an active part in the war, but by that time its original unit—the 53rd—had *disparu dans la tourmente*.

In this chaos the French railways performed marvels, but not even the most perfect technical efforts could neutralize Le Boeuf's well-meant but impracticable system. Soon all the railway stations and the restaurants in the large towns were full of soldiers, usually



without leaders, often insubordinate, and not infrequently drunk. So glaring did the evil become that the French War Office had to issue orders that these mobs of men should be rounded up and shepherded into the nearest depots. At Marseilles the congestion was at one time so serious that the commandant actually telegraphed to Paris to say that having 15,000 reservists on his hands whom nobody seemed to want he proposed to ship them to Africa to get them out of the way.

In the confusion and haste which marked the French preparation, such reservists as did join their regiments were miserably equipped. Many of them were without mess-tins, water-bottles or *tentes abris*. Regimental and corps transport were incomplete; they were deficient of horses, ambulances, supply columns, stretcher bearers, veterinary surgeons and administrative officers. A considerable part of the artillery harness proved to be useless. Ammunition was not always available. Large consignments of maps arrived, but they comprised only German territory—there were none whatever for the French frontier districts where they were first required. There were whole bodies of troops of whose whereabouts the Headquarters Staff were in complete ignorance. Before a shot had been fired one corps was without coin to pay its troops. The fortresses, besides being unfinished and indifferently armed, were more than half empty; Metz had neither coffee, sugar, rice, brandy nor oats. As early as July 26th the troops about that fortress were living on the reserve of biscuits. For 120,000 men there were only 38 additional bakers and these were woefully deficient of ovens. Strasburg was almost as badly off as Metz, while in Mézières and Sedan there was no biscuit nor preserved meat at all. At Châlons

an immense number of waggons were stored in an enclosure with high stone walls and only one gate ; it took several days to get the vehicles out.

The agony of France in those unready days remains on record in the copies of the despairing telegrams still preserved. A senior commander telegraphed on the 27th, "*Je manque de biscuit pour marcher en avant.*" The 7th Corps could not even be assembled. The War Office telegraphed to the corps commander asking where were his divisions. A brigadier arriving at Belfort sent the following unique message, "Arrived at Belfort. Cannot find my brigade. Cannot find my divisional commander. Do not know where my regiments are. What shall I do?" When the corps commander arrived he found "neither tents, nor cooking pots, nor flannel belts, nor medical nor veterinary stores, nor hospital orderlies, nor medicines, nor forges, nor picketing gear. As for the magazines of Belfort—they were empty." This was the army which the Minister of War had declared was ready to the last gaiter button, and the France which he had described as *archiprête*.

It was in such conditions that the French Army struggled towards the frontier, and on the 22nd July its position from right to left was as follows :—

1st Corps.	Marshal MacMahon.	Strasbourg.
5th Corps.	General de Failly.	Saargemund and Bitsch.
2nd Corps.	General Frossard.	St. Avold.
4th Corps.	General de Ladmirault.	Thionville.
	with, behind them,	
3rd Corps.	Marshal Bazaine.	Metz.
Guard Corps.	General Bourbaki.	Nancy.
6th Corps.	Marshal Canrobert.	Châlons.
7th Corps.	General Felix Douay.	Belfort.

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The frontage occupied by the French was thus somewhere about 150 miles, and not a single corps was ready for action owing to the breakdown in the arrangements for transport and supply. Nevertheless, by almost superhuman exertions on the part of the railways and administrative services, and by an extensive system of requisitioning from the inhabitants, most of the essential deficiencies had been made good by the 28th. On that day the French Emperor entered Metz and formally assumed command of the Army of the Rhine. Even in the physical condition of its commander-in-chief misfortune dogged the unfortunate French Army. Although rapidity was to be the keynote of the operations the army was to be led by a commander who was not only entirely unfitted for active campaigning, but who could not even remain in the saddle without suffering agony. Napoleon III was suffering from a most painful internal malady and was accompanied by a special surgeon to whom the significant instructions had been given *porter les instruments de sondage et même d'opération*.

In the closing days of July it had become clear that the grandiose plan of bursting across the Rhine, and of delivering a battle in Saxony, aided by the armies of Austria and Italy, *pour décider les destinées de la Prusse*, was clearly impracticable. There was still a complete dearth of any real information as regards the enemy, and in all the circumstances the offensive was perforce relegated to the background. Public opinion, however, was making itself strongly felt, and there was an undefined but insistent feeling at French Headquarters that something ought to be done. A French corps drove out the small frontier garrison at Saarbrücken, and after an almost bloodless battle fell back to the heights of Spicheren.

In marked contrast with the French the mobilization of the Prussian Army, and of the armies of the allied South German States had proceeded with orderliness and precision. July 16th was the first day of mobilization for the North German and the 17th for the South German troops. July 23rd saw both begin to move westwards in mass towards the frontier, the North Germans by six and the remainder by three lines of railway. In view of all the considerations of the case von Moltke had concluded that the left bank of the Rhine—Rhenish Prussia and the Bavarian Palatinate—was the fittest area of concentration for the bulk of the German forces. Such a concentration would be extremely close to the frontier and, in the event of a French dash—with imperfectly equipped forces—across the Rhine, it was considered that some modification in the detraining arrangements of the Germans might be rendered necessary. When, therefore, the Prussian Intelligence Department reported to von Moltke the dispositions of the French, as given above, the case foreseen had arisen and it became necessary to detrain the centre, or Second Army, on the Rhine. The general plan on which the strategic deployment was based was founded on the system recommended by Clausewitz for a war against France, in the first place the defeat of the French field armies, and in the second place the occupation of Paris. On the last day of July practically the whole of the German forces, divided into three armies, had concentrated on the Rhine and in the Palatinate beyond, and Moltke considered that the deployment was practically complete. On the right was the First Army, under General Steinmetz, consisting of two corps and a cavalry division in position at Trèves and echeloned along the roads in rear. The Second Army in the centre

was around Maintz ; it consisted of six corps and two cavalry divisions, and was commanded by Prince Frederick Charles. The Third Army of the Crown Prince of Prussia of two Prussian corps, two Bavarian corps and the Würtemberg divisions was about Landau.

The caution exercised in arresting the movement by rail on the banks of the Rhine and, in the case of the Second Army, in effecting actual concentration near that river, brought it about that the invasion of France had to be deferred for the moment, and the advance from the Rhine when it did take place was made in the form of a great crescent, of which the First and Third Armies formed the horns. On each side there was a certain amount of uneasiness, at German Headquarters because it was known that the French were in position on the frontier before even the first trains carrying German troops had started from the interior of the Fatherland ; and, on the French side, because in view of the lack of information as to the enemy's position, and in consequence of the enforced abandonment of the dash across the Rhine, the extent of front of the French was seen to be dangerously extended. The troops in Alsace, now under Marshal MacMahon, consisting of the 1st Corps at Strasburg and the 7th, nominally at Belfort, were widely separated from the bulk of the French Army in Lorraine. As the rapid invasion of German territory had been ruled out of court it was clearly advisable for the French forces to be concentrated as much as possible. MacMahon was, therefore, ordered to close to his left towards Bitsch ; and on the other side of the frontier the left wing of the German forces, namely the Crown Prince's Third Army, had been directed to push forward so as to distract the attention of the enemy from the temporarily unfavourable situation of the German centre.



A reference to the map will show that if MacMahon were to take the shortest route he must cross the head of the Crown Prince's advancing columns. Reluctance to evacuate Alsace decided him to take the risk, and the first serious action of the war, and the first of many repulses for the French, ensued.

To cover his flank march MacMahon pushed out a division to the old fortified town of Weissenburg, where it was surprised by the German Third Army on the morning of the 4th August. After a gallant resistance in which the French divisional commander was killed, the defenders fell back and made good their retreat to the neighbourhood of Woerth, covering the passage of the Vosges at that point. Exclusive of the Guard Corps under the Emperor's own hand and the 6th Corps en route from Nancy the French forces lay along the frontier in two unequal groups with a connecting corps. The right group of five divisions with three brigades of cavalry under MacMahon was at Woerth. The left group of three corps was under Marshal Bazaine and lay roughly in the area Spicheren-Boulay-St. Avold-Saargemund; it comprised the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Corps. Intermediate between the two groups was the 5th Corps at Bitsch, nominally at the disposal of Marshal MacMahon.

The 6th of August was a day of almost unredeemed disaster for the French. On the left the 2nd Corps of General Frossard was attacked by advanced units of the German First and Second Armies at Spicheren, and, owing to the complete failure of the commanders of neighbouring corps to come to his assistance, was forced to withdraw, though in fairly good order, towards evening. On the right MacMahon's force was heavily attacked by the Crown Prince's troops. The French here fought with splendid bravery, but each



hour brought additional German forces to the field and MacMahon looked in vain for the expected assistance of the 5th Corps from Bitsch. In spite of a splendid counter-attack by 1,500 Turcos in single line and the superb self-sacrifice of the French cavalry MacMahon's troops were enveloped on both flanks. Late in the evening the beaten force broke and fled in wild disorder only to be reformed, days later, as far back as Châlons. In the battle of Mars-la-Tour, soon to be described, the great bulk of it was destined to take no part.

At French Headquarters divided counsel was the sequel to the misfortunes of Spicheren and Woerth. Napoleon III's one idea was to cover Paris, and he proposed to withdraw all his force to Châlons and there to bar the way to the capital. Political feeling, however, ran high at Paris, and Ollivier telegraphed that public opinion would not tolerate the abandonment of Lorraine without a battle. The idea of retiring on Châlons was, therefore, renounced in favour of a concentration round Metz. On August 13th the French forces, which now included a portion of the 6th Corps from Châlons, were assembled under the detached forts east of Metz—a total of 176,000 men and 540 guns.

By this time a change had taken place in the command of the Army of the Rhine, pregnant with misfortune for France. Acting upon a strongly worded despatch from the Empress Eugénie, Napoleon III sent for Marshal Bazaine and directed him to take over the post of commander-in-chief. Bazaine protested that both MacMahon and Canrobert were his seniors in service, but the Emperor closed the discussion with the words, "*C'est un ordre que je vous donne.*" The new commander-in-chief was a soldier of wide experience in war who had risen from the rank of

private to the proud eminence of a Marshal of France. He had served with distinction in three continents and in many campaigns and had gained a well-merited reputation for personal bravery in the field. Nevertheless, he was of a character eminently unfitted to grapple with the terrible position in which the French army now stood. Lethargic, shiftily, evasive, unwilling to accept responsibility, and with a marked tendency towards double dealing and intrigue, Bazaine, for all his experience and personal courage, was not the man to bind victory to his chariot wheels in the evil hour of France.

Although the original intention in falling back on Metz had been to stand and fight, protected by the works of that fortress, the Emperor had become apprehensive of what might happen in the event of another reverse. He realized that if part of the Army of the Rhine were to be forced back the most frightful confusion would ensue in the passage through Metz to the other side of the Moselle ; and he accordingly urged Bazaine seriously to consider the matter. The new commander-in-chief had an interview with his sovereign about midday on the 13th and again a retirement on Châlons was decided on. During the evening orders were issued for the retreat, but so indifferent was the staff work of the French that no indication as to the hour when the retirement was to begin and no precise directions for the order of march were included. Thus, though the French troops were under arms by half-past four on the morning of the 14th, it was not until nearly noon that the retirement began, covered by the 3rd Corps which was deployed as a rearguard on the Borny plateau east of Metz. Any hope that the retreat of the Army of the Rhine would pass undetected or undisturbed was dispelled in the afternoon

when some advanced troops of the German First Army vigorously attacked the French rearguard. The remaining French columns faced about, and towards evening the 4th Corps came up in line with the 3rd Corps, while on the German side more and more troops were drawn into the fight. The affair developed into a battle which lasted until darkness came on. No definite result was obtained, but the delay imposed on the Army of the Rhine was seriously to discount its chances of getting clear of Metz.

All through the night the wearied French divisions, which had either been engaged in the battle of Borny or had been standing under arms, resumed their interrupted march over the Moselle. Owing to a false impression that the Germans were crossing the river north of Metz the chaussée through Auboué was not used, and the whole French Army filed along the road which led to Gravelotte. There the army was to divide into two portions, one to continue straight on through Mars-la-Tour, while the other was to bear to the right and march by Conflans. The night march was carried out with almost hopeless confusion, owing to the almost entire absence of preliminary arrangements by the French staff. In the narrow streets of Metz itself and along the high road beyond Ban St. Martin there were interminable columns of waggons, guns and troops of all arms marching without order, the men, exhausted by their efforts of the day, moving mechanically and lying down to sleep during the checks which occurred every few minutes. The orderliness and precision so essential for a force disentangling itself by night from a crowded city had disappeared. Here was a dragoon leading a cow; there an artilleryman with half a score live chickens tied to his belt; Zouaves of the Guard waddled along, their great loose breeches stuffed

with potatoes looted from the villages around. No staff officers gave directions. No sign-posts directed the sleepy columns as they drifted slowly through the streets. The great Army of the Rhine did not so much march as ooze confusedly out on to the Gravelotte road.

Bazaine owed much of his difficulty in getting his army away to the fact that no direct railway communication with Verdun existed, the line running back from Metz through Amanvillers and Conflans being still incomplete in 1870. It was soon brought home to him that the plan of marching his whole force by one road must lead to even worse confusion, and accordingly orders were sent to the 3rd and 4th Corps to gain the Conflans road by cross-country routes. Even with this reduction of numbers the passage of the troops towards Gravelotte was painfully slow, and the *moral* of some of them had been shaken by a burst of shell fire during the morning which had led to a temporary panic. When evening drew on but little progress had been made towards Verdun. The 3rd and 4th Corps had not extricated themselves from Metz, while the cavalry marching ahead had not made the progress anticipated. On the northern of the two roads du Barrail's cavalry division had reached Doncourt, while on the southern highway de Forton had got no further than Vionville. On both roads German cavalry had been met, and apparently in some force on the southern route.

Leaving the French endeavouring to disentangle themselves from the fortress of Metz, it is time to turn to the movements of their opponents. The battles of both Spicheren and Woerth on the 6th August had been brought on by the impetuosity of subordinate commanders on the German side; and, successful

though they were, they had the effect of upsetting for the moment Moltke's preconceived plans. The extent of the German victories was, indeed, not at first realized, and some delay occurred in profiting by them. During the 9th, however, orders had been issued for an advance to the Moselle. Some delay was caused by a show of force made by the Army of the Rhine when it deployed on the French Nied, but on the sudden resumption of their retreat by the French the German advance was continued. By this time the German Army had imbibed the idea that the French were in headlong retreat and were anxious to evade battle at all costs. When, therefore, during the 14th the German outposts opposite Metz observed signs of withdrawal on the part of the French their impatience could be no longer restrained; and as at Woerth and Spicheren the impetuosity of a subordinate leader brought about the battle of Borny above described. That battle was indecisive; but its result tended to strengthen the conviction of victory held by the Germans, and the idea of a French retreat became with them an obsession. Early on the 15th Moltke issued orders to profit by the victory of the 14th and to pursue the French along the Verdun road. The army primarily affected by this injunction was the Second of Prince Frederick Charles, which was south of Metz and was now free to cross the Moselle in pursuit of the enemy.

By the evening of the 15th August the situation of the German forces was as follows: The First Army was still on the east bank, but two of its corps were under orders to be prepared to cross the Moselle immediately south of Metz. Of the Second Army the IIIrd Corps and the bulk of the Xth had been thrown across the river at Novéant and Pont-à-Mousson. Further



south the Guard Corps with its cavalry division was over the river at Dieulouard, and to the south of that again the IVth Corps had seized the crossing at Marbache. The remaining three corps were in rear east of the river. Far out in front and destined to exercise a great influence on the following day was the 5th Cavalry Division—attached to the Xth Corps—astride the Metz-Verdun road near Mars-la-Tour.<sup>1</sup>

Thus was brought about the most remarkable battle of the war—that of Mars-la-Tour, fought on August 16th, 1870. Although the principle dominating Moltke's action in passing the Second Army over the Moselle was that of allowing the French no respite, the battle when it was engaged was, so to speak, accidental. Both von Moltke and Prince Frederick Charles were acting under the impression—certainly during the forenoon of the 16th—that the Army of the Rhine had got a long start and that the efforts of the German Second Army would most probably consist in attacking a rearguard and in that way interfering with the French retreat. Neither of the two German generals had allowed for the delays caused by passing the French Army through Metz, and neither probably dreamt of the slowing down of the retreat to be caused by the indifferent staff work of their enemy, nor of the lethargy of Bazaine in allowing his men to rest in their *tentes abris* while German columns were but a few miles off. Prince Frederick Charles, indeed, was so obsessed with the idea that the French had got away that his chief concern was to dash forward parallel to the Metz-Verdun road to the Meuse where he hoped to head off the enemy. The whole French Army was,

<sup>1</sup> The Third Army of the Crown Prince was far to the south on the line generally Luneville-Bayon. It was out of the zone of the battle of Mars-la-Tour and took no part in it.



however, still between Mars-la-Tour and Metz, from which it resulted that the fraction of the German Second Army detailed to make for the high road and feel for a French rearguard soon found itself in a veritable hornets' nest of enemy troops. The story of the battle of Mars-la-Tour is briefly the story of the efforts of one German corps with two cavalry divisions to keep the whole Army of the Rhine in play until neighbouring columns had come marching to the sound of the guns with much-needed assistance. It is no less the story of the failure of the French to exploit a numerical superiority which lasted all day.

On the morning of the battle Bazaine was released from the shackles of higher authority, for the brave but unfortunate French Emperor then quitted the army. During the preceding day Napoleon III had managed to make his way through the disordered mass of troops moving out from Metz and had reached the village of Gravelotte. There Bazaine had an interview during the evening with his sovereign, and was surprised to have the question put to him, "Must I go?" During the night the Emperor himself decided that his presence would be but a handicap to his troops and made up his mind to depart. Very early in the morning of the 16th he sent for Marshal Bazaine to say farewell, driving off immediately, escorted by two regiments of cavalry, to Verdun along the Conflans-Etain road. Napoleon III's last injunction to the Marshal was that the latter should put the army in march to Verdun as quickly as possible. Bazaine, however, was soon to reveal the hesitancy which characterized all his subsequent military actions. Shortly after 5 a.m. he issued an order to the effect that the movement would be deferred until the afternoon in order to allow time for the 3rd and 4th

Corps to come up into line, and after a perfunctory paragraph as to carrying out the usual reconnaissance, he directed that the waiting troops should be allowed to repitch their *tentes abris*.

The battle of Mars-la-Tour was, in the main, to be fought for possession of the road from Metz to Verdun, which rising steeply from the Mance valley passes through Gravelotte, Rezonville, Vionville and Mars-la-Tour, the four villages being spaced roughly about two miles from one another. The road, running almost due east and west, divides the battlefield into two practically equal portions of open and undulating country, and from the highway the ground slopes irregularly and gently upwards, the villages on the route being in hollows or shallow valleys. The undulating country, though it provided cover for the troops, was sufficiently open in most places to allow of free movement even for cavalry charges. Immediately east of Rezonville the road crosses a ridge which separates two nullahs or ravines, the general direction of which is north and south. At the southern declivity of the ridge and extending eastwards as far as the Moselle was a series of forests; these and the hollow roads leading to the upland from the main river valley formed either dangerous defiles or useful screens and covered ways for the Germans advancing from the Moselle, according as the French might reconnoitre them or not. Properly dealt with by the French they might have been so many ambushes for the enemy; neglected—as they were—they afforded German troops, pushing forward from the river, an opportunity of effecting surprise. West and south-west of Rezonville the country was open; but there was a clump of trees shading a pool near Vionville, and north of the high road were larger patches of wood named after the

village of Tronville though some distance from it. These copses became of great importance in the battle ; and the hollow immediately east of the wood was destined to prove of immense tactical value as affording a covered way for German cavalry to advance preparatory to an important charge. Further to the east other copses stretched parallel to the main road, their southern edge being bounded by an old Roman road, the ancient highway between Verdun and Metz. These copses formed an effective screen, behind which the French right wing was able to move unobserved. North of Mars-la-Tour village two streams unite, one flowing westwards from the Tronville Wood and the other with its source near Mars-la-Tour flowing from south to north ; the valleys thus formed had an important tactical relation with both the village and the wood. Of the French troops on the field in the early morning of the 16th August the 2nd Corps of General Frossard was in front of Rezonville. Marshal Canrobert's 6th Corps was on the high ground about St. Marcel. The bulk of the 3rd Corps, now commanded by Marshal Le Boeuf, was about Verneville, while the Guard Corps was at or east of Gravelotte. On the northern road the cavalry division of du Barrail was about Doncourt ; on the main Metz-Verdun highway de Forton's cavalry division was in bivouac just west of Vionville. The battle was to be fought out under trying conditions of weather ; even early in the morning the sun was unendurably fierce and by mid-day the heat was tropical.

Although the battle was to come as a surprise to the Germans the first discomfiture, and a serious one, was experienced by the French. On the Metz-Verdun road, in addition to the division of General de Forton, there was at Vionville also the cavalry division of

General Valabrégue. It will be remembered that on the German side the 5th Cavalry Division had the previous day got astride of the highway in the vicinity of Mars-la-Tour, and had actually been engaged, though lightly, with the French horsemen. Contact was, indeed, never broken off, for all through the night of the 15th-16th shots were exchanged between the French and German vedettes, especially north of the high road in the neighbourhood of the Tronville copses. Curiously enough the undoubted presence of hostile troops in the near vicinity seems to have aroused but little uneasiness in the mind of the French cavalry commanders. De Forton was misled by inaccurate information brought by patrols who professed to have found Mars-la-Tour empty, and who stated that no danger was to be apprehended from the neighbourhood of Tronville village. Nevertheless, information came in which should have been sufficient to put him on his guard and to induce him to send out further patrols with definite orders to clear up the situation. Practically nothing, however, was done ; and when about 8 a.m. the order was received that the hour of march was postponed and that tents could be repitched General de Forton seems to have considered these instructions as a guarantee that all was clear to the front and flanks. He accordingly directed that the horses should be unsaddled and watered and that the troops should breakfast, while he himself prepared to have his morning meal. Meanwhile the divisional baggage train arrived at the village, and there ensued the scene characteristic rather of peace manœuvres than of war—men drawing rations, officers' servants opening their masters' kits, and mess domestics laying tables for the officers' breakfast. Before General de Forton could begin his

meal he was requested to move to an eminence outside the village to satisfy himself as to the meaning of some small bodies of troops visible to the immediate front. Several officers joined the group and studied the figures moving about a mile away, but the assertion of one of them that they "must be from our 4th Corps" satisfied all parties. The group broke up. General de Forton returned to his interrupted omelette. The next moment a shell pitched in Vionville, and the battle of Mars-la-Tour had begun.

Incredible as it may seem little over a mile away there had been not only all the morning but since the previous day some four to five thousand German cavalry. These were the 5th Cavalry Division, which had been reinforced by a couple of batteries of horse artillery, bringing the number up to four, and the commander, General von Rheinbaben, had been directed by the commander of the Xth Corps to ascertain what was going on at Rezonville, and to attack if a favourable opportunity presented itself. Patrols sent out reported the existence of a large camp of French cavalry in which cooking was actually going on. A horse battery was then quickly brought into position south-east of Tronville, and at 9.15 it opened fire upon this unusual target. The shells burst among the shelter tents of the French, among the tables set for the French officers' breakfast, and in the midst of a squadron watering at the tree-shaded pool. In quick succession three additional batteries appeared on the crest, and opening fire added to the confusion below. The dragoons of Prince Murat's brigade south of the main road broke and fled, and accompanied by a mob of panic-stricken civilian drivers dashed off towards Rezonville. Some horse batteries of the French were rushed into action and the German cavalry, which was



by now not more than half a mile away, was stopped sufficiently long for the French mounted troops to fall back in some kind of order.

Thus opened the bloodiest and most decisive battle of the Franco-German war—a battle of which it has not unjustly been said that it defies description in detail. Fought on no prearranged plan and representing merely a struggle between two armies stumbling one against the other, the battle was to prove a chance encounter to which each side brought up reinforcements. On each side inaccuracy of information, or a complete lack of it, was to handicap the rival commanders, on the side of the Germans no less than of the French. The lack of information possessed by Marshal Bazaine is amazing, for even admitting that the reconnaissance work of the French cavalry was indifferent, still the fact that the French were operating in their own country should have enabled their Intelligence Department to gain by agents and from the inhabitants a clear inkling of the enemy's whereabouts and intentions. The presence of hostile troops on the Moselle south of Metz was indeed known on the 15th, but apparently the French plans were based on the totally erroneous supposition that the Germans were crossing the river in force near Thionville far to the north of the fortress. Thus, on the 16th, although an attack from the southward was evidently in prospect, it is clear that Bazaine must have seriously underestimated the force likely to be brought against him. On no other supposition can his order permitting the pitching of the men's *tentes abris* be understood.

On the German side in each grade of the higher command there was error and even varying error. The factor common to all was the idea that the French had got away and that operations would take the form



of pursuit. So obsessed were the King of Prussia and von Moltke with this idea that they remained all the morning at Herny, east of the Moselle, nearly forty miles from the region where the battle was to develop. As for Prince Frederick Charles, the commander of the Second Army, on the morning of the 16th not only was he in ignorance of the fact that there were large French forces on the Metz-Verdun road at Rezonville, but he did not even know that the German 5th Cavalry Division was astride that road between the French and Verdun; and it was owing to his ignorance that he did not arrive on the field, where his presence was urgently required, until late in the day. Similarly in the next lower grade General von Alvensleben, commanding the IIIrd Corps, was not aware of the presence of a hostile force on the highway until about 6.30 a.m., when he was actually on the march to, and but a few miles from, it. But although both French and Germans were labouring under false conclusions there was this essential difference between the spirit animating either side. With the Germans there was in all grades and all ranks the one clear objective, to strike at the French—either by heading them off from the front or by harrying them with rearguard action, or by a combination of both methods. On the French side Marshal Bazaine seems to have had no clear-cut plan at all. His whole attitude throughout the day was apparently to accept attack without any underlying design other than to prevent the Germans cutting him off from Metz. A realization of the different principles on which the two armies fought on the 16th August will do much to ensure an understanding of the story of the battle which is now resumed.

Scarcely had the French at Vionville recovered from the temporary panic caused by the shells from the

batteries of the 5th Cavalry Division when firing was heard behind them to the east. This was from the guns accompanying the German 6th Cavalry Division, whose leading units, mounting the plateau above Gorze, drove in the French outposts opposed to them. Against the wide semicircle of cavalry, which now extended from the Bois de St. Arnould to the Tronville heights, the French infantry advanced to the attack radiating from Rezonville. Both sides now assumed the offensive, but at the extremities of the great cavalry arc of the Germans there appeared at about ten o'clock the heads of the advanced guards of the two divisions of the IIIrd Corps. The division on the German right was the 5th, and its commander had hurried forward his guns, in some cases even in advance of his infantry, while the right wing of the division gained the northern edge of the Bois de St. Arnould. The left wing of this division, however, had a hard tussle in securing the high ground south of Flavigny and the 52nd Regiment suffered very heavily. Before the objective had been secured most of the officers were either killed or wounded, and the colour was passed from hand to hand as each bearer was shot down. Fortunately assistance was at hand, for a detachment of the Xth Corps, under Lieut.-Colonel von Lynckner, had been left at Novéant, and it was hurried into the fight in time to afford the help so urgently required. The apparition of the German forces and the rapidity with which battery after battery of enemy guns came into action had a bewildering effect upon the French and induced them to magnify the opposition. "The enemy line of battle," wrote a French general later in his official report, "described round us an immense arc whose extremities and centre were protected by great batteries of position

supported by field pieces. Everywhere there were Prussians, emerging from woods on the sky line and surrounding us with a circle of fire."

General von Alvensleben had been watching the battle from a vantage point from which a wide view of the field was to be obtained, but up to between ten and eleven o'clock he was still imperfectly acquainted with the true state of affairs. He still thought that the affair was one with a French rear-guard, and in consequence the 6th Division, which was marching with Mars-la-Tour as its first objective, was under orders to proceed towards Jarny with the idea of cutting off what was still thought to be but a fraction of the whole French Army. Alvensleben, however, began to suspect about this time that his conclusions might possibly be incorrect ; and, pushing on towards Tronville, he took occasion to discuss the state of affairs with the commander of the 5th Cavalry Division whom he met en route. It was then that the true situation was revealed. Alvensleben realized at last that his solitary corps, with but the two cavalry divisions to support him, was confronted by the whole of the Army of the Rhine. Undaunted by the prospect opened out before him he took a decision of the greatest moment. He determined *coûte que coûte* not to relax his grip upon the French, content to risk the annihilation of his own corps if only the enemy could be delayed until fresh German forces could arrive upon the field. He realized clearly that the nearest corps, the Xth, could not intervene for some hours. Nevertheless, the IIIrd Corps must be thrown in its entirety into the fight. Orders were, therefore, sent to the 6th Division to wheel inwards to its right, and shortly after eleven o'clock took place what was perhaps the outstanding incident of the Franco-German War ;

German infantry advanced to the attack with their backs to their enemy's capital and their faces towards their own country.

The movement was soon attended by success. Aided by the fire of a powerful line of batteries the 6th Division advanced against Vionville, and after a short but desperate action gained possession of the village at 11.30 a.m. Realizing that the place could not be held so long as the high ground immediately to the east was in the possession of the enemy, the divisional commander gave the order to push on, and Flavigny soon fell, though not without hard fighting. At the moment when the right units of the 6th Division swarmed into the village the left of the 5th Division also entered it. By noon the wood of St. Arnould and the two occupied villages marked out the right and centre of the front held by the IIIrd Corps and a strong force of artillery. The left which was weakly held extended towards the Roman road. In the second line were the two cavalry divisions and one regiment of infantry. The IIIrd Corps was now definitely astride the Metz-Rezonville-Verdun road.

While the fighting was at its height there could be seen on the French side, near Rezonville, a solitary horseman riding slowly along the French line and pointing with his cane now and then as if indicating the direction in which he wished an advance to be made. It was Marshal Bazaine. So soon as the first cannon shots of the morning had been heard at Gravelotte the commander-in-chief had been warned by an officer of the escort that fighting was going on in front along the Verdun road. The Marshal had just sat down to breakfast ; leaving the table he mounted his horse and rode off to the scene of action. Before moving off, however, Bazaine gave instructions that

his headquarters were to be moved back about half a mile nearer to Metz—a significant indication of his unwillingness to cut himself off from the fortress. Before the marshal had proceeded far he saw streaming along the highway towards him a disorderly procession of men and vehicles, an indication of how the day was going, which Bazaine, however, viewed with characteristic unconcern. The dominating resolve in his mind at the time was not to allow himself to be separated from Metz, and he personally directed the cavalry of the Guard to keep a sharp watch on the ravine leading from the Bois des Ognons and to charge *à fond* any hostile body which might there make its appearance. Slowly the marshal continued on his way to the southwest of Rezonville, where he was able to form an idea of the extent of the action and of the strength of the attackers. Two separate but co-ordinated attacks were clearly in progress: one coming from the south from the direction of the Bois de St. Arnould and the woods west of it, the other from the west from Mars-la-Tour.

Whatever military faults may be attributed to Marshal Bazaine on this fateful day lack of personal courage was not one of them. In places the troops of the 2nd Corps were giving way, and in some cases actually streaming from the field. Bazaine at once set to work to rally the stragglers and then rode along the line animating those who had not yielded to the temptation to flight. The calmness with which he spoke reassured the impressionable French soldiers and restored the *moral* which had been in danger of perishing. In one spot where the line had broken Bazaine himself ordered the drummers to sound the charge. A battery of *mitrailleuses* was passing at the time, and the marshal directed the battery commander where to



come into action, and pointed out a Prussian battery as the target. Yet, in spite of the resolution which Bazaine displayed before the rank and file, he failed in his duty as a commander-in-chief. He issued no instructions for the battle at large. He gave no indication as to the necessity of keeping the road to Verdun open. He sent no order whatsoever to the 4th Corps; nor did he make any enquiry as to its whereabouts, although the last news of it were those of the night before. He seemed indeed almost to have forgotten his right wing, a mass of 75,000 men, by the proper and timely employment of which victory could have been assured.

At midday the situation on the French side was that the 2nd Corps was drifting back and two regiments of the 6th Corps sent to Flavigny and Vionville had been driven off. Bazaine accordingly sent back for the Guard and the Reserve of Artillery to replace the 2nd Corps and to endeavour to wrest from the German guns the moral and material superiority they had so far enjoyed.

Meanwhile General Frossard, the commander of the 2nd Corps, had been a restless spectator of the retirement of his troops, and he felt convinced that unless the French cavalry could intervene a disaster was imminent. Two regiments of mounted troops were now close to Rezonville, namely the 3rd Lancers and the Cuirassiers of the Guard, the latter regiment at the moment being just south of the highway near Rezonville facing west. Galloping up to the commanding officer Frossard called out, "Charge with your regiment or we are . . ." The colonel of the Cuirassiers felt, however, that he could not comply without the sanction of his divisional commander, and a hasty conference then ensued in which Bazaine, Frossard



and the cavalry general took place. Frossard became more and more insistent, while the commander-in-chief *demeurait toujours indifférent sans rien décider*. Finally, Bazaine was heard to mutter, "Yes, we must sacrifice a regiment; we must stop them." Taking this for an order Frossard lost no time in sending an orderly officer off at the gallop to the 3rd Lancers. No one, however, thought of preparing for the charge by utilizing the batteries of the Guard Cavalry Division nor of the Reserve of Artillery; no one thought of making even a hasty reconnaissance of the ground to be charged over; and no one, indeed, even remembered to assign any definite objective.

To roars of *Vivent les lanciers!* from the infantry the 3rd galloped off towards Flavigny, their way being encumbered by cooking pots, mess tins and odds and ends abandoned in the panic of the early morning. It seems to have been understood in a vague way that the enemy's guns were the objective, but, on topping a slight rise, what was taken for a German battalion in square, in reality some eight companies of skirmishers of the 12th and 52nd Regiments, was seen almost straight to the front. The lancers dashed forward, preserving a formation worthy of a review, and under a terrific rifle fire from the infantry who had thrown themselves into a rough semicircle. Then from the lancers came the shout—by whom uttered has never been known—to wheel to the right. This made the cavalry swerve away from the German infantry and brought them up against the high road. The charge was over and had failed to effect any result. The regiment then drew off and rallied behind Rezonville.

A finer effort was immediately to follow. When the 3rd Lancers had started off Bazaine had intimated that they were to be supported by the Cuirassiers of

the Guard. These were drawn up in a line of five squadrons presenting an imposing sight and moved off in that formation. Soon, however, some hedges bounding enclosures on the southern outskirts of Rezonville necessitated a short movement in column of route, and on emerging from the obstacles the advance took place in three lines, two squadrons in the first and second and one squadron following in rear. Breaking into a gallop and then into the charge the three lines of heavy cavalry tore down upon the German infantry companies which had just dealt with the onslaught of the 3rd Lancers. The infantry reserved their fire until the Cuirassiers were about two hundred yards off, and then a volley followed by rapid fire was directed against the cavalry. The left squadron of the leading line missing its objective dashed past it, but the right got close up to the Germans only, however, to be mown down by the fierce rifle fire. The second line, charging up from behind, was stopped by a regular rampart of dead and wounded men and horses; swerving to the right it was raked by a rifle fire which threw it into indescribable confusion. The solitary squadron forming the third line was forced to pull up. Nothing remained but to draw off the regiment, which eventually rallied near Rezonville having suffered casualties amounting to 18 officers and 170 men.

To cover the retirement of the broken French cavalry Bazaine had brought up a battery of the Guard Corps and was watching through his glasses the return of the remnants of the Cuirassiers. Suddenly there was a shout of "*German Cavalry!*" and in an instant there ensued a mêlée in which Bazaine and the officers with him, French gunners and Prussian hussars were intermingled. From the high ground near

Flavigny the charge of the French Cuirassiers had been witnessed by the chief of staff of the Xth Corps, and when it was repulsed it seemed that a favourable opportunity had arisen for the German cavalry to attack. Immediately the 17th Hussars with two squadrons of the 2nd Dragoon Guards moved off eastwards of Flavigny, and to the cheers of the German infantry which they passed charged after the retreating Cuirassiers, while the 11th Hussars followed to the right and rear. Except for the men who had been unhorsed the Cuirassiers had got safely away, but the commanding officer of the 17th Hussars, seeing a French battery to his right, dashed at it with some twenty of his men. It was the battery of the Guard which Bazaine had brought up, and in an instant the group round the guns was borne backwards, carrying with it the staff of General Frossard who was standing near. Bazaine's nephew and orderly officer who was some little distance away galloped off to summon the marshal's escort of Chasseurs. On his way he fell in with a squadron of the 5th Hussars, and these veterans of the Mexican campaign dashed in to the assistance of the commander-in-chief. A moment later the squadron of Chasseurs was in the struggle, and hardly had they engaged when two squadrons of the 3rd Lancers who had just rallied at Rezonville joined in. The Prussian hussars, leaving several of their number as prisoners, burst their way out of the *mêlée*. The engagement had been a hot one while it lasted, and Bazaine had drawn his sword, preserving even in the thick of the struggle the insouciance which distinguished him upon the field.

The German 6th Cavalry Division was for the moment taking no active part in the battle. It was formed up in a hollow well south of Flavigny,

and about 11.45 General von Alvensleben had sent off an order from his battle post near that village for the division to pursue the French infantry who were at the moment retiring over open ground. The order was, however, not carried out until one o'clock, and when the horsemen emerged in the open they were met by an accurate artillery fire from the French batteries near Rezonville. The cavalry, however, pushed on to the Gorze-Flavigny road, but were not able to effect any result of consequence, and indeed fell back. The reason officially assigned to this failure of a mass of twenty-three squadrons to achieve even a partial success at a moment when the opposing infantry was falling back, or had recently fallen back, is given in the German Official Account as the arrival of infantry of the French Guard Corps to reinforce the 2nd. This is now known to be inaccurate, and the 6th Cavalry Division was driven back chiefly by the rifle fire of some units of the 2nd Corps who had by this time pulled themselves together. In a word, the cavalry division had let the right moment slip by and had intervened too late.

Separated from his staff in the scuffle which had taken place with the German hussars, Bazaine borrowed a couple of young staff officers from the 2nd Corps and rode about the field, leaving no indication as to where he could be found when his staff had reassembled. Considerable confusion ensued. The marshal was nowhere to be seen, and so insistent became the belief that Bazaine had been captured that arrangements were hastily made for the appointment of a successor. The chief of the Operations Section of General Headquarters rode off to seek Marshal Canrobert who decided, however, to await confirmatory instructions from Jarras the Chief of Staff. Meanwhile Lieutenant

Albert Bazaine, on his own initiative, had galloped to the Guard Corps to inform Bourbaki that the marshal was in the hands of the Prussians; and to suggest that he should take over supreme control. Bourbaki agreed, so that at a critical stage of a critical battle there were three commanders, either *in esse* or *in posse*, within a short distance of each other—Bazaine, who for a time was thought to be a prisoner, Canrobert in the thick of the fight awaiting merely a formal investment of his new powers, and Bourbaki, most of whose troops had not yet been engaged. Bazaine had, meanwhile, been with the headquarters of the 3rd Corps, busying himself en route with the work of a battalion commander or giving directions which were sometimes cancelled, or even completely reversed, within a few minutes. At one spot he directed a battery where to come into action; at another he took a few men from a brigade and personally placed them as outposts to cover the deployment of the main body. Here he ordered the drums of a battalion to sound the charge; and there he directed a band to play the regimental march. To such old acquaintances as he met in his wandering over the field, who ventured to enquire when the offensive was really to begin, he replied vaguely either that the German Third Army was uniting with the Second about Fresnes-en-Woevre, or that Steinmetz was attacking the French left so as to cut the Army of the Rhine off from Metz. Soon afterwards, however, the agitated Headquarters Staff discovered the missing commander-in-chief standing tranquilly under a tree, and some element of direction entered once more into the battle.

The offensive had not been entirely renounced on the French side. The bulk of the Guard Corps had now come up and had been arrayed in front of Rezon-



ville. Canrobert put his reserve brigades into line on their right, and both established their reserve artillery on the heights north and east. Against this array of guns a detachment from the Xth Corps, under Colonel Lehmann, which had been sent to hold the Tronville copses, had great difficulty in maintaining its position. At this time the bulk of the French 3rd Corps was moving south-west from Verneville and de Ladmirault's divisions were just showing their leading troops about Doncourt. Canrobert, who had developed a strong line of guns as well as infantry on the right of the Grenadiers of the Guard, both on the front and flank of the weak German left, determined to attempt the recapture of Vionville and Flavigny. For various reasons, however, the project was delayed; the wanderings of Bazaine, the absence of any real co-ordination of command, and the professed inability of the commander of the 3rd Corps to support the movement except with his artillery all being contributory factors. Nevertheless, the undoubted signs of French activity between Rezonville and the Roman road were not without effect upon the enemy.

It was now about two o'clock and the crisis of the battle had arrived. After five hours of continuous and bitter fighting, a certain reaction had set in upon the German side. The inability of the 6th Cavalry Division to make any impression in the centre of the field between Flavigny and the Bois de St. Arnould had imposed a serious check on the hitherto successful efforts of the IIIrd Corps, and it seemed certain that the French were about to make a violent effort against the weak German left. General von Alvensleben had no infantry left in reserve. All his battalions were exhausted by the severity of the fighting, apart from the diminution of their strength caused by the heavy



casualties which had been suffered. The supply of ammunition was also a grave source of difficulty, and the conditions in which the battle was being fought put a further strain upon the troops. The heat was terrific, and water was almost impossible to obtain in most portions of the field. It looked as if the IIIrd Corps had shot its bolt and Alvensleben was well aware of the gravity of the situation. To one of his subordinates he exclaimed that he felt like Wellington at Waterloo—"would to God that either night or the Xth Corps would come." It was still, however, but early afternoon and the Xth Corps could not be expected for at least an hour. But something must be done to gain time, even if the respite were but brief.

Near Tronville there was standing the heavy brigade of General von Bredow, which formed part of the 5th Cavalry Division and consisted of the 7th Cuirassiers and the 16th Uhlans. To it von Alvensleben sent his chief of staff with instructions that the brigade should charge the French guns in action between the Roman road and Rezonville. General von Bredow was at the moment under the impression that the Tronville copses were in the hands of the French, and some time was lost in choosing by lot two squadrons to watch the woods. The cavalry brigadier then put himself at the head of his remaining six squadrons and led them over the high road, dipping then into a shallow valley which ran northwards and generally parallel to the eastern face of the Tronville copses. For about fifteen hundred paces the brigade trotted up this natural covered way and then wheeled into line of squadron columns so that it now faced almost due east. Immediately the deployment of the leading regiment, the 7th Cuirassiers, was complete the order was given to gallop, and in a moment the

whole brigade dashed over the crest of the ridge straight for the French guns. The onslaught of the German cavalry seems to have come upon the French as a complete surprise and considerable confusion ensued, which was increased by the cloud of dust raised by the horses charging over the parched ground. An added cause of confusion was the fact that at the moment of the charge some French batteries which had suffered heavily were in the act of being relieved by others.

The cavalry burst right through the line of batteries, sabring the gunners and the teams of such as remained and pursuing those which galloped from the field, and then continued their career against the infantry in rear. But in this quarter of the field the French had many mounted troops, chief among them being the cavalry division of General de Forton which had been surprised by this same enemy earlier in the day. Burning to avenge the stigma of the morning French squadrons from right and left threw themselves upon the German cavalry whose horses were now exhausted after a gallop of over three thousand yards. Then ensued an indescribable scene—a regular maelstrom of men and horses in which the Germans were at a severe disadvantage as regards numbers. It so happened in the *mêlée* that the 7th German Cuirassiers were engaged with the regiment of the same number and designation in the French service, and some way from the main struggle there was to be witnessed an almost mediæval combat between a gigantic Prussian officer and an officer of the French Cuirassiers. For a few moments the duel between the rival cuirassiers in all the splendour of casque and breastplate riveted the attention of watchers from the Roman road until the maelstrom surged round the two combatants and

drove them apart. After a short but terrific struggle the German cavalry eventually forced their way out to rally later near Flavigny. The six squadrons—in all under 800 strong—had lost 16 officers, 363 other ranks, and over 400 horses, and the next day the line of the charge was marked out in white—the dead bodies of the White Cuirassiers. But the sacrifice had not been in vain. Time had been gained ; the advance of the French 6th Corps was checked ; and for the moment the terrible pressure on the Prussian left was eased.

The respite for the Germans was, however, to be but temporary. The arrival of the French 4th Corps on the field greatly strengthened the French right and proved an additional menace to the exhausted Germans. The 4th Corps had made a wide detour on leaving Metz, in order to avoid the congestion which had taken place on the road to Gravelotte, and had passed through Amanvillers on its way to gain the northern road to Verdun. About 9 a.m., when the first shots were fired in the battle of Mars-la-Tour, the heads of the columns of the corps were in the act of debouching on the Amanvillers-St. Privat plateau, and by noon the commander, General de Ladmirault, arrived at Doncourt. By that time he was generally informed as to the state of affairs. He knew that the 2nd Corps was in action, with the Guard Corps within supporting distance in rear, and that the 6th Corps was engaged on the right of the 2nd, while a part of the 3rd Corps was behind. From the high ground east of Bruville de Ladmirault was soon able to make out several battalions of the 3rd Corps extending towards the Roman road, while to the south there appeared some enemy cavalry north-west of the Tronville copses. Hurriedly summoning two horse batteries the commander of the 4th Corps directed them to come into

action against the hostile horsemen and then galloped back to meet his infantry columns. The time was now about twelve noon, and this was the first intervention of the 4th Corps.

By two o'clock General de Ladmirault disposed of a division of infantry, nine batteries, and a cavalry division, and was, further, protected on his outer flank by another large mounted force. Patrols had brought him information that Mars-la-Tour village was practically unoccupied by the enemy, and the situation, therefore, seemed eminently favourable for an offensive. He was, it is true, quite in the dark as to what were Marshal Bazaine's intentions at the moment. No staff officer from General Headquarters had come near him all day, and such information as he had of the 2nd and 3rd Corps had been gleaned from those units themselves. He saw, however, that an attack on the Tronville copses would be supported on the left, and realized no less clearly that the French were now completely outflanking the enemy. An enveloping movement even was not impossible provided the copses were first made good, and to this he now devoted his attention. As a matter of fact the advance of the 4th Corps had breathed new life into the dormant offensive of the 3rd and 6th, and units from both these corps were already converging on the Tronville copses, and so soon as this movement proved successful General de Ladmirault determined to move his attacking division over the ravine which barred his way to the wood. This was at about a quarter to three, and against the overwhelmingly superior force arrayed against it the weak detachment of Colonel Lehmann could do but little, although it utilized to the full the opportunities for a delaying action afforded by the thick underwood of the copse. Finally,

however, it was forced back to the southern edge to take refuge under the protection of the horse batteries of the 5th Cavalry Division which had done such good service throughout the day. These batteries were, however, themselves soon in a precarious situation, for the artillery of the 4th Corps was concentrating its fire upon them and they were forced to withdraw, some of them south of the main road. It was now four o'clock, and the left flank of the Germans was definitely outflanked by an infantry force supported by at least nine batteries. It looked for the moment as if the sacrifice of von Bredow's cavalry had after all been in vain ; but almost immediately afterwards the pendulum swung back and the threatened left wing of the Germans was once more saved. Like the Prussians at Waterloo the Xth Corps was to intervene at the critical moment.

The story of the battle must now turn to the Xth Corps whose intervention decided the day. It will be remembered that Prince Frederick Charles had misjudged the situation on the day before, and his orders for the 16th were based upon the supposition that the French were much further on their way to Verdun than was actually the case. Consequently in his operation orders issued from Pont-à-Mousson at 7 p.m. on the evening of the 15th he had directed the Xth Corps to continue its march on Verdun with the line St. Hilaire-Maizeray as its first objective. The corps commander, however, found some difficulty in obeying these instructions to the letter. His cavalry—the 5th Cavalry Division—had reported to him the presence of large French forces between Mars-la-Tour and Metz, and he did not feel justified in pushing westwards towards Verdun with this unknown body of the enemy on his right rear. For some reason or other this intelli-



gence had not been transmitted to Prince Frederick Charles, and the commander of the Xth Corps had to make a compromise between obeying the instructions of the army commander to the full and ensuring his own protection. While, therefore, determined to push on generally to Verdun he detached portions of his force to reinforce and assist the 5th Cavalry Division. The doings of these detachments have been already mentioned. There were in the first place the two batteries of horse artillery which were sent up under Lieut.-Colonel von Caprivi, his Chief of Staff; and in addition there were the detachments of Lynckner and Lehmann which were to reunite at Chambley to form a support for the cavalry division. As a matter of fact the former was sucked into the fighting about Gorze, and Lehmann's battalions had been sent to the Tronville cotes. After parting with these detachments the commander of the Xth Corps had half the 19th and the whole of the 20th Division, as well as a brigade of Guards cavalry, with which to push on to Verdun.

The half of the 19th Division which was at the head of the Xth Corps accordingly left Thiaucourt en route for St. Hilaire at 6.15 a.m. and its further movements will be narrated later. As for the 20th Division when it arrived at Thiaucourt it went into bivouac, but before the men had settled down an order came to it to abandon the further march towards Verdun and to march north immediately. By half-past two the leading units were entering Chambley, and as it now appeared that the centre of the IIIrd Corps was in urgent need of reinforcement, three battalions were detached from the 20th Division and were sent to render the required assistance. The artillery, too, was hurried forward to lend its aid while the more slow-moving infantry followed on. By this time the



battalions of Colonel Lehmann had been forced to abandon the Tronville copses and, as has already been related, the Prussian artillery on the left flank was in a difficult position. Preparations were even being made for a withdrawal of some of the batteries when an orderly officer galloped up, his horse covered with foam, shouting, "Only half an hour to wait. The head of the Xth Corps is coming up." The welcome intelligence reanimated the German troops, and when the 20th Division came up it was determined to regain the Tronville copses and thus secure the threatened left flank. At 3.15, therefore, the leading battalions debouched from Tronville and advanced to the attack. At this time the half of the 19th Division was being drawn into the struggle from the far side of Mars-la-Tour, a circumstance which created some alarm on the French side, for the apparition of these fresh foes advancing from the west was difficult to account for. As a French eye-witness remarked, "It looked as if they were marching back to Germany through our columns." The uneasiness produced a retrograde movement on the part of the French in the copses, with the result that the battalions of the 20th Division gradually forced their way northward through the undergrowth and by five o'clock the wood was once more in German hands.

Up to this hour the battle, so far as the Germans were concerned, resembled the previous battles of the war, inasmuch as it had been brought on, and was being fought out, by subordinate commanders. All the morning and for part of the afternoon Prince Frederick Charles had remained at his headquarters at Pont-à-Mousson in complete or partial ignorance of what was really happening. His original supposition was, as has been said, that the French had got a long start, and this error persisted until after one o'clock. Then

the news which came in led him to a different but no less erroneous conclusion. He reported to von Moltke about 2 p.m. that the French were retiring in a *northerly* direction. In other words he was up till that time imbued with the idea that his troops were engaged merely in rearguard fighting with an enemy retiring west or north. Of the fact that one of his corps was sacrificing itself—or prepared to do so—by keeping a grip on the whole Army of the Rhine he had no inkling. Shortly after two o'clock, however, the series of reports received revealed to him the truth. Without an instant's delay he set off for the field, arriving about half-past four on the high ground west of the Bois de Vionville, after a fourteen-mile gallop in less than an hour, to be received with loud cheers from the corps which he had commanded for ten years.

The orders of Prince Frederick Charles on arriving were briefly to the effect that pressure should be kept up upon the left, while a holding action should be maintained upon the right. On the latter flank the main object of the Germans was to maintain the position already in their hands, and the principal rôle in the engagement devolved upon the artillery. During the next three hours and, indeed, until the end of the day, the combat on the German right remained stationary, varied by desperate attempts to win ground from the French which cost many lives and achieved no marked success. It was to this quarter of the field that Bazaine in his anxiety not to be cut off from Metz had devoted most of his attention, and in consequence the flow of French reinforcements led to considerable activity on their part. But on the German side seven fresh batteries came successively into action, so that about four o'clock the German line of guns between the Bois de Vionville and Flavigny had

been increased to more than a hundred pieces, and their fire effectually prevented an advance by the French either from their right or centre. Some portions of the VIIth, VIIIth and IXth Corps were brought across from the east of the Moselle, and on the arrival of a brigade from the VIIIth (which belonged to the First Army) an attempt was made to carry the heights south of Rezonville, but it was defeated with heavy loss. Till nightfall the battle on the eastern sector of the field was in the main of a stationary character.

Far otherwise was it upon the western portion of the field where severe fighting was still to take place. The commander of the 4th French Corps who had been joined by heavy masses of cavalry had on the heights near the farm of Gruyère a division of infantry and a strong force of artillery. On his right ran a deep and steep ravine towards Mars-la-Tour. He was about to cross this obstacle and had, in fact, entered the hollow, when he became aware of a hostile body approaching from the west. This was the half of the 19th Division of the Xth Corps which, accompanied by a brigade of cavalry of the Guard Corps, had left Thiaucourt en route for St. Hilaire at 6.15 a.m. The infantry arrived at its destination some time about eleven o'clock, when orders were received directing it to march east to the assistance of the IIIrd Corps. On its arrival in the vicinity of Mars-la-Tour, the half division—now reduced to five battalions of the 38th Brigade, twelve guns and six squadrons of Guard Dragoons—was ordered to attack the French right. The small force advanced over the open ground north of Mars-la-Tour, but on arriving at the ravine in front of the French position the battalions came under a murderous infantry fire, and within a few minutes most of the officers and half the rank and file were out of

action. As a fighting force the 38th Brigade was shattered, and the wreck of the battalions fell back in confusion to be rallied later at Tronville. The French followed up their success, but were checked by a bold charge by the 2nd Guard Dragoons, in whose ranks rode two sons of the Chancellor Bismarck.

Here in this quarter of the field, to which the centre of gravity had now shifted, the culminating point of the battle was reached in a great cavalry *mêlée* on the upland of Ville-sur-Yron. At about half-past three General von Rheinbaben, commanding the German 5th Cavalry Division, had received orders to envelop the French right, but it was not until about half an hour later that the leading units commenced to advance from Puxieux on Mars-la-Tour. The French on their side had collected the bulk of three cavalry divisions near Bruville, and at about a quarter to seven the opposing masses became engaged and were locked in a great hand-to-hand struggle which proved to be the greatest cavalry engagement of the war. Nearly six thousand horsemen took part in it, and never since has the world witnessed, nor is it likely again to witness, a cavalry fight of such magnitude. The struggle terminated in favour of the Prussians, who threw practically every horseman available into the fight, whereas on the French side through misunderstanding some units were kept back. Gradually the French were forced back towards Bruville; and the Prussian cavalry reformed on the contested plain, and then slowly retired on Mars-la-Tour.

From his position near Flavigny Prince Frederick Charles had eagerly watched the development of the battle, and when about 7 p.m. the firing became more intense on the right and reports gave reason to expect reinforcements on that flank, he determined to deliver

a general attack. The movement was attempted, but the Xth Corps after its forced march was incapable of further exertions, and the artillery of the IIIrd Corps was at once stopped by the guns and rifle fire of the French Imperial Guard. Some desultory fighting continued, the German cavalry made a futile attempt to charge in the darkness, but by nine o'clock the battle had everywhere died away, and a profound silence reigned over the whole field.

Thus ended a battle glorious for the German arms, and one well meriting the epithet "decisive." It has been claimed that it was not decisive in the sense used by Hallam, by which a decisive battle is one to which a different result would have demonstrably altered the history of the world; and that in this respect Mars-la-Tour cannot challenge comparison with Châlons, or Hastings, or Valmy, or the Marne. It was not decisive in the dramatic sense of Sedan, for there were few guns or prisoners or trophies to show, and both armies, wearied by a twelve-hour struggle, bivouacked opposite one another, doubtful of what the morning would bring forth. But in the limited signification, at any rate, of the term as equivalent to "of such effect as to lead directly to an early conclusion of the war," *decisive* is a fit epithet for the contest of August 16th. By a bold employment of their numerically inferior forces, the invaders had stopped the French retreat and given time for their main body to interpose between the forces of MacMahon and Bazaine. To the bulk of the Army of the Rhine had been opposed merely the IIIrd and Xth Corps with two cavalry divisions, and fractions of the VIIIth and IXth, and the numbers actually engaged may be roughly estimated at 60,000 Germans to 120,000 French. Tactically it was a drawn battle. Each side had suffered the same losses as the other,



some 16,000 of all ranks. Each side, indeed, claimed the victory; the French because they withstood the attempts of the Prussians to dislodge them from their main positions; the Prussians because the enemy had not been able to recover the ground lost by him in the forenoon, nor to continue his retreat. But the day cannot be judged merely by its tactical results. The true strategic import of the battle gave the lie to any French claim of victory, and even to the lesser contention that the fight was drawn.

Whatever opinion may be held as to how the history of the world would have been affected had the battle ended differently, there can be little doubt that Bazaine's action after Mars-la-Tour was to alter conditions in the world in an unmistakable manner. When night fell on the 16th August, 1870, the French had no sensation of defeat. The opinion current in all ranks was that the Germans had been held, and there was a general expectation that the battle would be renewed upon the morrow in conditions favourable to the French. At French General Headquarters the greatest optimism prevailed. The chief of the Operations Section regarded the day's fighting as a French Sadowa, while others prophesied that Bazaine would be granted the title of Duke of Rezonville for the success which he had achieved. The French commander-in-chief, however, decided that the continuation of the attempt to reach Châlons was for the moment out of the question, and he withdrew his army to a position north and east of Metz. Here he was attacked by the Germans on the 18th August, after the invaders had wheeled through a hundred and eighty degrees, and were fighting with their communications exposed. In the great battle of Gravelotte the French right was turned, and Bazaine then withdrew



under the guns of the fortress, which was promptly besieged by an army detached for the purpose by the enemy.

This decision of Bazaine governed the further operations of the war, which need be described only at such length as will show the effect ultimately produced upon Europe and the world. Political feeling in France demanded the relief of the army in Metz, and MacMahon set out from Châlons to join hands with Bazaine by a long flank march and with an army not inadequate in numbers, though of indifferent quality. The catastrophe of Sedan on September 2nd was the result, where the whole army of MacMahon, with which was the Emperor himself, was forced to surrender. With the loss of all the field armies the second stage of the war began. The Empire was swept away, and the Government of National Defence made heroic efforts to raise and equip new forces. But, though armies sprang up almost in a night, what followed was a spirited and desperate but futile struggle against the German forces. Paris was besieged and almost everywhere the raw French levies were defeated. Disaster followed disaster. Strasburg fell on the 28th September, and a month later Bazaine surrendered Metz with an army of 173,000 men. The end of the war was now clearly in sight. Early in 1871, after an heroic siege of four months, Paris capitulated. Negotiations for peace were at once opened, and the definitive Treaty of Frankfort was signed on May 10th, 1871. By it France lost Alsace and Lorraine, in which were included the great fortresses of Metz and Strasburg, and was compelled to pay an indemnity of £200,000,000.

Even more important than the military gains was the political result which marked the end of the war. While Paris was in its death-throes the King of Prussia

was offered the imperial crown by his fellow-princes of Germany. He accepted, and the new union, including the southern states, was named the German Empire. At last the unity of Germany with Prussia at its head, for which Bismarck had so long striven, was an accomplished fact. A powerful race, bound together by the memories of common sacrifice, intoxicated by victory over the leading military Power of Europe, and under the hegemony of the masterful Prussia was to dominate the Continent. The memory of the influence thus exerted on the history of the world will not fade so long as the Great War of 1914 is remembered.

## TSUSHIMA

27TH MAY, 1905

SEE MAP 6

THE battles so far described in this volume were episodes in wars fought entirely for political ends or for some principle concerning which the contestants held divergent views ; in no case were the struggles brought about by territorial considerations as such. In the war in America sentiment, indeed, played a part no less important than mere political views. Each side fought for a principle, and the principles were by no means identical with the question whether slavery should, or should not, continue. The North fought primarily to maintain the Union ; while the South, though cherishing the Union and all it stood for, refused, nevertheless, to surrender the rights which it assumed to be inherent in sovereign states. Prussia fought Austria not to gain further territory, but to satisfy her ambition for leadership in the first place, and to promote the union of the Germanic people in the second. The war between France and Germany was almost entirely a political war. Neither side had suffered any tangible injury from the other, and the contest was brought about mainly by the fact that Europe was not large enough to hold two neighbouring Great Powers, both of which had strong claims to be regarded as the leading military nation of the Continent, and also by the fact that Napoleon III, for political reasons, wished to divert

the attention of France from internal affairs. The fact that in both of the last cited wars the victor came off the richer in territory does not imply that expectation of such possible gain was a *causa causans* of the struggle ; rather it signifies the desire of the victor to indemnify herself for her exertions, and to reshape her dominions in a way to give her added security in the future.

The war between Russia and Japan, on the contrary, was entered into for definite territorial reasons, and in this way is sharply distinguished from the wars already described. And in another respect it will be found to present a striking contrast. In America and Europe the opponents in the struggles were either in the same bond or confederation, or separated but by the artificial barrier of a frontier, with the result that the issues were necessarily fought out in the territory of either or both the contestants. The war between Russia and Japan was, on the other hand, decided in neither of those countries, but waged almost entirely in the territory of a third and neutral state.

The defeat of Russia in the Crimean War had marked the beginning of a new era in her history. Foiled in her attempt to establish herself on the Mediterranean by conquering Constantinople, she turned her face to the East in the hope of securing a warm-water port in the Pacific. Her expansion in Asia had been rapid, and the enormous distance which separated European Russia from the waters of the Pacific had been occupied, if sparsely, by a chain of Russian pioneers. Two years after the Crimean War, without any military operations, the cession of a great part of the Amur basin was obtained from China, and within a brief period, taking advantage of the exhaustion of China after her war with England and France, Russia forced

her to conclude a treaty of the highest importance. By it the eastern coast of Manchuria from the Amur to the Korean frontier was ceded to the Tsar. Russia's aspirations were, however, still unsatisfied. Although Vladivostok now gave her a new and excellent port it was open to the drawback that for three months of the year it was ice-bound. Russia's eyes now turned to the south, and took in their purview the Chinese province of Manchuria, the peninsula of Liao-tung, and the hermit kingdom of Korea.

The gradual approach of the great European Power had been viewed with growing apprehension by Japan, who had scarce recovered from the shock caused by the revelation of the strength of Western civilization. The Japanese had followed the same policy of seclusion as had the Chinese, and for centuries Japan had been almost hermetically sealed, for with the exception of a small Dutch trading station, allowed to exist on sufferance, Japan had no point of contact with the outer world. It was not until 1853 that this unnatural seclusion had been rudely disturbed by the arrival of an American squadron whose commander was empowered to demand from the Japanese Government protection for shipwrecked American sailors as well as certain trade facilities. The reaction of this forced acquaintance with outside civilization exercised a profound effect upon Japan, an effect heightened by her experience in 1863-64 when some of her towns were bombarded by European ships of war in retaliation for attacks against nationals of European Powers. The leaders of the country perceived in the gunnery of the foreigners a superior force, against which the primitive military methods of Japan, with its spears and coats of mail, could make no resistance whatever. The more enlightened Japanese saw

that a new era had arrived ; a group of ardent young reformers took the lead in the Europeanization of the island kingdom ; and in 1867 there began a revolution unparalleled in modern times.

Hundreds of young Japanese were sent to Europe and America to imbibe the principles of Western civilization and to bring Western knowledge to their native land. Japan sent to England for instructors for her navy, and to France—a teacher later to be replaced by Germany—for experts to train her army and to remodel her military system on the most approved Continental lines. In 1872 military service was declared universal and obligatory, and in her attempt to grasp the tenets of European civilization Japan found herself committed to the acceptance of the German military system which had practically revolutionized Europe. Not, however, that militarism was in any way foreign to Japanese characteristics and tradition. In the days of Japan's seclusion she had owned a system beside which the militarism even of Prussia would have paled. Each feudal chief maintained what was nothing less than a small army. A puissant *daimyo's* retinue often amounted to as many as a thousand armed men, and at the appearance of this military procession all commoners who happened to be abroad had to prostrate themselves with uncovered heads. The ethical code of the noble class was of a severely military description, and some apprehension was felt when universal service was introduced that the plebeian class might not rise to the level of courage, loyalty and endurance demanded of the military aristocracy. Such fears, however, proved ill-founded, for it was to be demonstrated that these qualities were national and not sectional in Japan.



The new Japan that emerged from the revolution of 1867 was a nation of alert, efficient, courteous and ambitious people, who had absorbed civilization in an amazingly short period of time, and who were animated by a patriotism almost religious in character. Further, the possession of a highly trained army and navy, when added to the fact that the large population of Japan required an outlet and that the progressive commercial class demanded an expansion of trade, constituted factors which were bound to cause a desire for expansion outside Japan itself. Near by, Korea and China seemed to offer a fair field for such ambitions, and in 1894 a war broke out with China over the relation of the two Powers to Korea. Over that hermit kingdom both China and Japan claimed suzerainty, and as Japan was anxious for a market for her products, friction was constant between the two states regarding their respective rights. In the war which ensued the newly learned methods of war placed Japan at an immense advantage as compared with her opponent. With their old-fashioned equipment and methods the Chinese were completely defeated and were glad to make peace in the following year. The complete independence of Korea was recognized ; a large war indemnity was paid to the victor ; and amongst other lesser acquisitions Japan was rewarded with the fortress of Port Arthur and the Liao-tung Peninsula in the south of Manchuria. These were exactly the places on which Russia, in her search for a warm-water port, had been casting longing eyes.

Russia now clearly realized that her whole scheme of expansion in eastern Asia was imperilled, and that her long search for an ice-free port might again prove to be a fruitless quest. She immediately formed a

coalition with France and Germany, and before the treaty between Japan and China was ratified the representatives of the three European Powers presented a joint note to Japan. In it was the suggestion that Japan should forgo her claim to territory in Manchuria, since its retention "would be prejudicial to the lasting peace of the Far East." Recognizing the folly of rejecting such a significant hint from the three strongest military Powers in the world, Japan bowed to the inevitable in characteristic fashion. She courteously "yielded to the dictates of humanity," relinquished the Liao-tung Peninsula and Port Arthur, and immediately set about doubling her army and multiplying her navy by three.

The resentment which Japan, not unnaturally, felt at the action of Russia was certainly not diminished by the action of the latter in her railway policy in the Far East. Before the days of the revolution which had brought Japan into touch with modern life the question of constructing a railway across Siberia had been under discussion in Russia, and in May, 1891, the first sod was turned by the Tsesarevich, afterwards the Emperor Nicholas II. The eastern terminus was to be Vladivostok, and so rapidly was construction pushed on from both ends that after five years the line was complete, except for a gap of about a thousand miles between Strietensk and Khabarovsk. If the railway were to be wholly in Russian territory it would be necessary, in completing this section, to construct the line in the valley of the River Amur which here formed the southern boundary of Russian territory in Eastern Asia. The Amur, however, makes a wide detour to the north, and time, distance and money could be saved if the track were laid in a straight line across the intervening stretch of the Chinese province of Man-

churia. At this time Russian diplomacy was paramount in Peking. A Russo-Chinese bank had been established which lent large sums to the Chinese Government; and in return for financial leniency permission was given to cross Manchuria in the construction of the final section of the Trans-Siberian Railway. By this concession Russia was given a footing in Chinese territory and placed more conveniently for any further movement towards the south.

An opportunity for extension southward, which she was not slow to seize, was vouchsafed Russia in 1897 when the anti-foreign risings in the Chinese province of Shan-tung led some of the European Powers to demand from China leases of Chinese ports. Russia now determined to settle the question of an ice-free port, and at the same time to establish her supremacy in the Far East, once for all. In December Russian warships appeared at Port Arthur, and in the following year a convention was concluded with China by which that strategic point, as well as Ta-lien-wan, were leased to Russia for twenty-five years. These places were occupied by Russia early in 1898, and in the following year the construction of a branch line from the trunk Siberian railway to Port Arthur was begun. Nothing was now wanted by Russia to make her practically mistress of Manchuria but a plausible excuse for pouring troops into the province. The Boxer rising in 1900 provided just the pretext required, and five Russian columns entered Manchuria, so that by the end of September practically the whole province was in Russian hands.

Japan had watched these happenings with profound anxiety and suspicion, sentiments which had been growing steadily since 1875—in which year, when just

emerging from her seclusion, she had to cede half of the island of Sakhalin to Russia—and had been strengthened by the action of the three Great Powers in compelling her to forgo the spoils of her successful war with China in 1894. Japan's feelings at the moment can be readily understood. If there were any reality in the danger which Russia, Germany and France had solemnly declared to be incidental to a Japanese occupation of portion of Manchuria, the same danger must *a fortiori* exist when a much larger portion was occupied by a far greater Power. And further, the occupation of Manchuria, a territory exceeding in size the total areas of France and England, would place Russia in a favourable position for a fresh advance—this time into Korea, a country which was of extreme importance to Japan. A wave of indignation swept over Japan, and her people were with difficulty restrained by her statesmen. Russia, however, viewed the situation with cynical indifference ; the acquisition of Port Arthur meant that she had now an ice-free port the whole year round ; and she set about immensely strengthening it as a fortress and converting it into a base for a large and powerful fleet.

Japan's prestige was, however, increased by a defensive alliance concluded with England in 1902, by which each nation pledged itself to observe neutrality if the other were attacked by a single opponent, but would come to the assistance of its ally if another Power joined the enemy. This meant that if Russia were to be aided by France or Germany then England would aid Japan, but in practice it virtually amounted to an assurance that in the case of hostilities between Japan and Russia the ring would be kept clear for these two contestants. The significance of the treaty was not lost upon Russia, who made a definite promise

to withdraw from Manchuria when order should be restored. But although she carried out the evacuation of her troops, so far as the first instalment was concerned, later withdrawals were postponed. As Russia's military preparations were meanwhile increasing, Japan demanded a reply to the question when the evacuation of the province would be complete. An evasive reply was returned by Russia, and negotiations between the two Powers dragged on from August, 1903, to February, 1904. Finally Japan, convinced that Russia was merely trying to gain time to tighten her grip on Manchuria, and becoming alarmed at signs of Russian activity on the Korean frontier, broke off diplomatic relations and commenced hostilities.

In the war which had now begun Japan was at many and obvious disadvantages. In the first place Russia was in secure and definite occupation of territory from which Japan wished to dislodge her, and was in the happy position of being able to claim that possession was nine points of the law. It remained for Japan to exploit the tenth point—that of forcible expulsion—a process which necessitated that she must convey her army across the intervening waters before she could come to grips with her opponent. Again, in numbers available for the struggle on land there was no comparison between the rival Powers. Japan's first line army consisted of some 270,000 men, behind which there were not more than another 200,000 trained men of the older classes ; while Russia, although at an inferiority in Eastern Asia, had at the far end of the Siberian railway almost limitless resources on which to draw, the peace footing of the Russian Army being almost a million men. On the other hand, Japan possessed the immense driving force furnished



by the unanimity of her people, an intense and passionate patriotism, thorough preparation, and a longing to avenge the humiliation forced upon her by the surrender of Port Arthur. As for Russia, she had entered upon the war almost entirely unprepared in the military sense, and almost entirely indifferent to its causes and objects. The great mass of the Russian people knew little and cared less about Far Eastern affairs, and during the war many thousands of Russian soldiers gave up their lives in pathetic ignorance as to why they were fighting. Far different was the case in the Japanese ranks, and it is hardly too much to say that there was scarcely a private soldier who did not feel that it was to him and his comrades that the destiny of his country was entrusted. The great disparity in numbers was also counterbalanced by the fact that Russia would have to transport the bulk of her field army thousands of miles by a single track railway. The operation would be an extremely difficult one, but, as it turned out, not so difficult as the Japanese had imagined, and a feature of the campaign was the serious error the Japanese made in their estimate of the efficiency and capabilities of the Trans-Siberian railroad. In one most important service Japan held a great advantage over Russia—that of Intelligence. The struggle was to be fought out in Chinese territory, and whereas it is comparatively easy for a Japanese to pass off, at any rate to European eyes, as a Chinaman, a Russian thus disguised would find it almost impossible to impose upon a Japanese. The secret service of the Japanese was thus far superior to that of the Russians, in spite of the fact that the latter were operating in a country in which they had been established for several years.

Japan's obvious strategy was to strike early and to



strike hard, so as to clear the Russians out of Manchuria before the weak forces there could be rendered unassailable by the arrival of vast reinforcements from Europe. Such policy implied that Japan must transport her field army overseas. Theoretically it was necessary that absolute command of local waters should be first secured ; on the other hand, should Russia succeed in evading the issue by sea the delay would be all to her advantage, since time would thus be afforded her to build up her land forces, a possibility which it was vital to Japan to rule out of court. As so often happens in strategical considerations some compromise was required, and Japan determined to run the risk of forgoing absolute command of the sea rather than afford Russia time to prepare herself on land. The task of the Japanese navy, which had only a slight superiority over the Russian Pacific Squadron, was, therefore, to keep the two sections of that fleet—at Port Arthur and Vladivostok respectively—separate and, if possible, defeat them in detail ; but the transport of the army was not necessarily to be held back until such defeat was an accomplished fact. Provided that the Russian fleet were reduced to relative inactivity the fact that it would still be in being must not be allowed to affect the landing of a Japanese Army on the continent with the least possible delay. Once on the Asiatic mainland the objective of Japan would be twofold. The fortress of Port Arthur was the main naval base of Russia in the East, and its capture would seriously hamper the Russian fleet and would go far towards solving the question of maritime command which was of such importance to Japan. Over and above this potent reason there was to be borne in mind the immense prestige which would accrue to Japan in expelling *vi et armis* the Power

which had come into possession of the fortress by cynical chicanery at her expense. The second objective for the land forces of Japan, trained in German methods and imbued with the lessons of German strategy, was a great and convincing Sedan.

Three days after the rupture of diplomatic relations the Japanese navy paralysed the Russian squadron in Port Arthur by a surprise attack, and the same week the first units of the Japanese First Army, under General Kuroki, disembarked at Chemulpo in Korea. Meanwhile, on the Russian side, General Kuropatkin, the commander-in-chief, had decided to refrain from opening an offensive campaign until he was ensured of the necessary superiority in force which would not be reached for at least three months. He accordingly selected Liao-yang as his point of concentration and pushed out a covering detachment to the River Ya-lu which formed the frontier between Manchuria and Korea.

Delayed by the atrocious Korean roads which broke up as the ice thawed the Japanese First Army was not in a position to force the passage of the Ya-lu until the end of April, and on the 1st May the Russian detachment, largely outnumbered by General Kuroki's Army, was forced to retire north-west. Four days later the Japanese Second Army, under General Oku, began disembarking on the eastern side of the Liaotung Peninsula at Pi-tzu-wo, and, turning south, defeated a Russian force at Nan Shan, where the peninsula narrows down to its most constricted width, and drove it back towards Port Arthur. Meanwhile the Third Army of the Japanese, under General Nogi, had begun to land, also at Pi-tzu-wo, and as it was the army specifically told off to the task of reducing Port Arthur, it took the place of the Second Army which

was now free to advance up the peninsula to take part in the Sedan which was the goal of the Japanese strategists, so far as the operations of the field armies were concerned. During the first week of June, therefore, the general situation of the Japanese field armies in Manchuria was as follows. On the right the first army of General Kuroki had passed the Ya-lu and was about Feng-huang-cheng. On the left was the Second Army towards the toe of the Liao-tung peninsula. Between the two a central army—the Fourth—had landed part of its effectives at Ta-ku-shan. These three armies were to make a combined advance against the Russian zone of concentration which was known to be generally about Liao-yang, and, as the distances to be traversed by the three advancing armies were by no means equal, careful co-ordination and effective staff work were called for to ensure the final union at the critical moment.

In spite of a Russian diversion down the peninsula to relieve the pressure on Port Arthur and an attempt by General Kuropatkin against the Japanese First Army to the east, the three Japanese field armies gained touch with one another ; and as they converged upon their objective towards the end of August Marshal Oyama took over supreme command of the whole force. Following the example of their German preceptors the Japanese dispensed with a large General Reserve, and the advance against the Russian position was made in a long line of seven divisions of which the three armies were composed. General Kuropatkin had devoted considerable attention to his prearranged battlefield, and against the elaborate defences the Japanese, in spite of the ardour of the attack, could make little real impression. But though the Russians beat off all attacks against their advanced and main

positions, a bold movement on the part of Marshal Oyama decided the issue in his favour. He threw his right army across the Tai-tzu Ho. The Russians made furious attempts to deal with this unexpected danger now threatening their left flank and their sole line of retreat, but the Japanese army over the river held firm. General Kuropatkin had declared that he would die rather than abandon Liao-yang. But his resolution was shaken when to the danger of his left was added the fear lest his right might be driven in by the continued assault of the two Japanese armies still south of the river. He accordingly gave orders for retreat and withdrew his forces skilfully and in good order. The natural strategic centre of Manchuria was now in the hands of the Japanese, and General Kuropatkin did not halt until he had placed the rivers Sha and Hun between himself and his victorious foe. Nevertheless, the result had fallen short of the hopes of the Japanese leaders, and it was now seen that the military policy of Japan had failed to produce the numbers requisite to bring about a Sedan. Fought in the week which included the anniversary of that battle, the coincidence in dates accentuated the disappointment of the Japanese Higher Command.

The first great trial of strength between Russia and Japan revealed resemblances to previous European contests, and reproduced features which had exercised an important influence on two battles already described in this volume. In the culminating stages of the advance on Liao-yang the situation of the Japanese closely resembled that of the Prussians in 1866. The concentration of the three Japanese armies on one battlefield was made, not along the circumference of the long arc they occupied, but towards the centre,

and in the case of the Japanese First Army it had to fight its way through mountain passes in a manner almost identical with that of the army of the Crown Prince of Prussia. Similarly, General Kuropatkin was in the position of Benedek, for he enjoyed the possession of interior lines and of the central reserve which enables such advantage to be exploited. No less striking is the point of resemblance between Liao-yang and Mars-la-Tour. In the latter battle it will be remembered that a portion of the German force was thrown over the Moselle, owing to the prevailing impression that the French Army was at the moment in full retreat. Something similar occurred at Liao-yang, for it is now generally believed that the Japanese First Army was ordered to cross the River Tai-tzu owing to certain movements observed on the Russian side being interpreted as indicating a general retirement. In each case the action of the side detaching portion of its force had the effect of exposing such detachment to risk of defeat if not of annihilation. The comparison between Liao-yang and the battles of 1866 and 1870 must, of course, not be pressed too far, but sufficient identity is revealed to show that in war incidents which have happened in the past are likely to repeat themselves in spite of changes in tactical and other conditions.

After his retirement from Liao-yang General Kuropatkin thought for a time of retreating as far north as Tieh-ling, but the political importance of holding Mukden, and the steady flow of reinforcements to his army from Europe, induced him to turn and take the offensive. Thus ensued the great battle of the Sha Ho, fought with the intention on General Kuropatkin's part of driving the Japanese back over the River Tai-tzu. From the 5th to the 18th October hard fighting



went on, and, although the battle was indecisive in a sense, the losses on the Russian side amounted to some forty-two thousand, or nearly double that suffered by their opponents. And, whatever the exact tactical result of the battle, strategically it was a defeat for the Russians. The pressure on Port Arthur was in no way relieved, and from the point of view of *moral* the Sha Ho was a severe blow to the Russian side.

After the great battle of the Sha Ho the rival armies—anticipating the feature which was later to distinguish the greatest of all wars—went to ground, in places but a stone's-throw from one another. The war had now lasted just over eight months. In that period the Japanese field armies had been consistently successful, and had emerged victorious from two great battles and many minor actions. But though the glory of Liao-yang and the Sha played about their bayonets the situation of the Japanese was critical in the extreme. The outstanding feature of the war was that an insular power had penetrated into the territory of a vastly stronger continental one. In the past island powers had shown how a numerical inferiority of land forces might be counterbalanced by supremacy at sea, with the possibility thus afforded of shifting the centre of gravity of a campaign at will, as at Vittoria, or of temporarily withdrawing, as at Corunna, from the theatre of war. But the supremacy at sea enjoyed by England during the Peninsular War had been secured by an overwhelming naval victory such as Japan had not yet been able to achieve. Her control of local waters was not unchallenged; for though the Russian Pacific Squadron was paralysed it was by no means destroyed. The portion of it belonging to Port Arthur had made a disconcerting recovery. An unexpected sortie took place in June,



and though the Russian ships had been driven back into port with some loss, the surviving vessels had still to be reckoned with. The Vladivostok squadron was, it is true, now reduced to negligible proportions, but it had made six raiding cruises before it was brought to book.

To the possibility of danger from the ships still in Port Arthur there was also the very real peril arising from a new feature of naval warfare—that of mines. Japan had entered the war with six battle-ships; she had lost none in action, but on one day and within one hour two of her finest vessels had been sent to the bottom by the agency of mines. A repetition of such disaster was by no means impossible, and should it be incurred the result might be absolutely fatal to Japan. For she had no reserve whatever of armoured ships; she did not possess one single yard in which any had been built; she was absolutely dependent on foreign shipbuilding, a source of supply closed to her in time of war. Such a state of affairs was without precedent in naval warfare. The general situation towards the close of 1904 was, therefore, disquieting for Japan. Practically her whole field army was locked up overseas, and her sea communications with the Asiatic continent were by no means assured. It is true that so far as the Russian navy in local waters was concerned, Japan had maintained command of the sea without undue difficulty. But whereas Japan had been employing practically the whole of her maritime forces, Russia had been carrying on the war so far with what was merely a detachment of her total naval strength. In European waters there were still available numerous ships of war, and should these be despatched to Far Eastern waters and succeed in uniting with the vessels in Port Arthur, it was quite possible

that Japan might suffer such a naval defeat as would prevent her being able to maintain her sea communications. The gravity of such an issue had ever since the outbreak of war weighed heavily on the minds of the Japanese statesmen, and the peril was brought home to them by the news that on the 15th October a new phase of the war had begun—a large fleet had sailed from Russia for the Far East.

Soon the progress of this squadron was causing serious anxiety in Japan, a progress which had completely falsified the anticipations of experts who had believed that lack of coaling and docking facilities would cause Russia to recall the ships. Indeed, were the rate of progress already made to continue, the arrival of the Russian fleet in the theatre of war might be looked for at the beginning of the New Year. To meet this serious peril it was imperative that the Japanese navy should be at its maximum efficiency, and barely sufficient time remained for the Japanese dockyards to bring this about, even working at the highest pressure. So insistent had the necessity of refitting the Japanese ships become that Admiral Togo had laid down that, even at the cost of abandoning the blockade of Port Arthur, his vessels would have to be withdrawn and sent to Japan for docking. In these circumstances the task of destroying the Russian warships within Port Arthur must now form part of the duty of the besieging army. To ensure such destruction from the land side one thing was essential—the possession of some point of vantage from which the harbour could be overlooked and where an observation station could be installed to direct the fire of the siege pieces of the army. An elevation on the north-west side of the fortress, known as 203 Metre Hill, seemed to answer the purpose, and Admiral Togo

pointed out the advisability of securing it without delay.

The experience of the Japanese round Port Arthur had been such as almost to daunt the soldiers who had taken part in the siege. Two general assaults had been made upon the fortress, the first in the closing week of August and the second on the last days of October. On each occasion the Japanese had been repulsed with terrible loss. Then, on the 26th November, another assault was made, but although there was serious fighting all along the line little was gained, and on the 27th, after losing 12,000 men the Japanese abandoned the attempt. Still, even if the capture of the fortress had to be postponed, the general situation was so serious that the possession of 203 Metre Hill must be secured at all cost, and against that point the whole weight of the attack was directed. For ten days the Japanese fought with desperate energy, and although two assaults were repulsed by the splendid resistance of the defenders, on the 5th December the hill was in Japanese hands, though not before 10,000 casualties had been incurred. And now from the summit was afforded a clear view of the inner harbour and the doomed ships below. Immediately an observation station was installed on the hill, and the fire of the Japanese howitzers was directed by telephone upon the Russian ships of war. Thanks to the facilities thus afforded the practice of the Japanese siege artillery became so accurate that within a few days practically the whole of the Port Arthur squadron was *hors de combat*. This proved to be the turning-point of the siege. Operations were continued by the Japanese with renewed vigour, while to the disheartened defenders the death of General Kondratenko, the soul of the defence, came as a serious blow. On the 2nd

January, 1905, the fortress of Port Arthur surrendered. The menace exerted by the despatch of naval reinforcements from Russia had thus lost much of its potency. Nevertheless, although the situation was no longer alarming, the progress of the squadron from Europe could not be regarded with equanimity by the Japanese Higher Command.

It is now time to turn to the Russian fleet which was on its way from Europe to put to the test the question of sea supremacy, and incidentally to decide which nation was to be dominant in the Far East. The decision of the Russian authorities to despatch naval reinforcements to the theatre of war had not been arrived at suddenly, but was the result of deliberations which had been in progress for some months. As far back as April, 1904, it had been decided in principle that it was above all things essential to dispute with Japan her command of the sea, and for such contest the strength available in Russian waters held out fair hopes of success so far as material was concerned. For whereas Japan's strength in battleships was known not to exceed six—and as a matter of fact was reduced by the agency of mines to four—Russia had in the Black Sea and the Baltic fourteen vessels of that type. Treaty obligations, however, which Russia thought it prudent to respect, deterred her from any attempt to pass warships through the Dardanelles; nevertheless, there were in the Baltic seven battleships of which four formed a homogeneous class of vessels of modern construction. During the early months of 1904 many of the vessels in the Baltic were either uncompleted or not fully equipped, and the despatch of reinforcements had therefore to be deferred to the last quarter of the year. On the 15th October the Baltic fleet—or, as it is more correctly

termed, the Second Pacific Squadron—began its long voyage. It was under the command of Admiral Rozhdestvensky, and consisted of seven battleships, four first-class as well as a couple of smaller cruisers, some destroyers and a few fleet auxiliaries.

The adventure on which the Baltic Fleet had embarked was one of exceptional difficulty, for quite apart from any comparison between material and personnel of Russians and Japanese, the voyage had immense difficulties of its own. On the whole long route to be traversed Russia did not possess one single coaling station nor a single dockyard, and the question of obtaining supplies at neutral ports and the facilities for repairs depended largely on the interpretation likely to be placed upon international law by the particular neutral concerned. Vigorous steps were taken to render the fleet independent to some extent of such source of assistance, and during the period from September, 1904, to the following January seventy colliers were despatched from Europe with cargoes of coal for the Russian ships. Eleventh-hour organization could not, however, make up for the inefficiency of the warships' crews nor remedy their defective training, and the opening phase of the voyage revealed serious shortcomings in the handling and manœuvring of the ships. A lack of confidence both in themselves and in their vessels quickly took possession of the Russian naval officers and men, a state of things which was soon disclosed by the well-known Dogger incident. Panic-stricken at the appearance of some British trawlers, in which the imagination of the Russians saw Japanese torpedo boats, the Russian squadron ran amok, sinking one of the British boats and causing some loss of life. It was not an auspicious start, and the storm of indignation which



the incident evoked in England went near to adding another opponent to Russia.

Without further incident the Baltic Fleet made its way to Tangier, shadowed by a British squadron which was only called off when the Russian Government promised to refer the Dogger Bank affair to an international tribunal. At Tangier Admiral Rozhstvensky decided to divide the Baltic Fleet into two squadrons, for it was thought that the larger vessels, which exceeded their designed draught, might not be able to pass through the Suez Canal. The larger section, under the commander-in-chief, therefore, continued south, arriving at a prearranged rendezvous in the north of Madagascar. The voyage had been broken by stays at the French ports of Dakar and Gaboon, at the Portuguese harbour in Great Fish Bay and at the German possession Angra Pequena, the authorities at the last-named place being the readiest to afford facilities to the Russians. The weather north of the line had been intensely hot and there was some sickness in the fleet as a result, but on the whole the difficulties of the voyage were surmounted far more easily than had been expected. The weather after rounding the Cape was very heavy, but the Russian ships in spite of the large quantity of coal carried on board behaved extremely well. At Madagascar, in the closing days of 1904, Admiral Rozhstvensky was joined by the detachment which had proceeded by the Red Sea, to the discomfiture of experts who had asserted that the lack of coaling stations would spell insuperable difficulty for the Baltic Fleet.

The news of the fall of Port Arthur, while it seriously diminished the hope that the Baltic Fleet might end the war in Russia's favour, freed Admiral Rozhstvensky from the necessity of pushing on as quickly as



possible, and allowed him to take the opportunity of giving his crews some much-needed training. He was also able to await the arrival of a small reinforcing squadron which added a couple of fast cruisers, a few destroyers and three other vessels to his command. Consequently it was not until the middle of March that the voyage was resumed and the long stretch across the Indian Ocean begun. This section of the voyage was performed successfully and without serious incident, other than a number of temporary breakdowns and the necessity of coaling several times at sea. On the 14th April the squadron reached Kamranh Bay in French Cochin China, where a stay of several weeks was made, thanks to a generous interpretation as to the duties of neutrality on the part of the French admiral in those waters. And on the 9th May the Third Pacific Squadron, under Admiral Nebogatov, arrived, consisting of an obsolescent battleship, four armoured coast defence vessels, an old armoured cruiser and four fleet auxiliaries. The fighting value of this reinforcement was small, for the ships were the very dregs of the Russian dockyards. They had, however, made a good voyage, and with this new addition Admiral Rozhestvensky found himself at the head of a fleet numbering fifty keels in all.

The long delay at Madagascar had gone far to lessen anxiety in Japan over the arrival of the Baltic Fleet in Far Eastern waters, and there grew up an idea that the voyage might possibly be abandoned. But any feeling of relief among the Japanese authorities was, discounted by the happenings in the land campaign. After the fall of Port Arthur the dominant idea among the Japanese strategists was to bring about the long-delayed Sedan at the earliest possible moment ; and hardly were the preliminaries for the

surrender of the fortress put in hand when the Japanese Third Army was hurried north to take its place with the armies in the field. Another army, too, was formed both from units of the Third Army and from Reserve units from Japan. With these five armies Marshal Oyama advanced at the end of February, 1905, from which movement resulted the great battle of Mukden. From a tactical point of view the Russians suffered a severe defeat, but their army managed to evade the enveloping movement of the Japanese, and from the strategical point of view the battle must be written down as a partial failure for the victors. For, great as had been the tactical result, the battle was not the battle which Marshal Oyama had hoped to bring about, nor was it the battle demanded by the general situation. Shaken and roughly handled though it was the Russian Army got away, and its losses could be replaced with ease from the still almost illimitable resources of Europe. Far otherwise was it with the Japanese; with them the man-power question was causing some anxiety, and from a financial point of view the situation was distinctly serious. Had the desired Sedan been brought about it was not impossible that Russia might have called off her Baltic Fleet and come to terms with her opponent; but with her army still in being there was much to be gained by the decision still to dispute Japan's command of the sea. And by that Power the whole question of dealing with the Baltic Fleet had again seriously to be considered.

The arrival of the squadron of Admiral Nebogatov deprived the Russians of any effective excuse for further delay, and accordingly on May 14th the combined fleet set sail for the final portion of its voyage. As Port Arthur had now passed into the hands of the Japanese the goal of the Baltic Fleet was to be Vladi-

vostok, a change in the original programme of the most serious disadvantage to the Russians. The docking and repair facilities at Vladivostok were of a poor order when compared with those of Port Arthur, and the accession of strength to be achieved from junction with Russian warships in that port would be very small. With the surrender of Port Arthur and the destruction of the ships sheltering within it, the Russian flag had, indeed, practically ceased to fly in Far Eastern waters, and at Vladivostok there were now only one cruiser and some half-dozen torpedo boats. Nevertheless, that port would afford the Russian ships a temporary refuge, within which minor refitting and the cleaning of the foul bottoms of the ships could be carried out, and it was towards it that Admiral Rozhdestvensky now shaped his course. Considerations of the necessity for coal economy ruled the longer route east of Japan out of court, and the Russian admiral decided to attempt the passage of the Korean Strait, taking the eastern channel, thus leaving the Island of Tsushima on the port hand. In accordance with this decision the course of the Baltic Fleet was shaped on the 25th May to pass twenty-five miles south of Quelpart Island, and throughout that day the Russian fleet forged slowly ahead to the Strait of Korea. A fresh south-westerly wind was blowing, with a fairly heavy sea. The day passed quietly, but the breakdown of the engines of one of Admiral Nebogatov's old coast defence vessels compelled the whole squadron to reduce speed throughout the night. There was still no sign of the enemy, and in order to take the fullest advantage of the immunity he had so far secured, Admiral Rozhdestvensky sent out no scouts and gave strict orders that the wireless telegraphy installations on the ships were not to be used. When dawn broke on the 26th the

clouds lifted for a moment and the sun shone fitfully, but a thick mist still lay on the water favouring the Russians in their attempt to elude their enemy. Anxious to avail himself of every moment of daylight while passing the Japanese coast where torpedo attack might be expected, Admiral Rozhestvensky arranged for the fleet to be in the centre of the Straits of Tsushima at noon on the 27th May. This decision left him four hours to spare, in which he determined to exercise his fleet in manœuvring. The result, however, was not such as to inspire confidence in a fleet which might be called upon to fight a great battle within a few hours. The main portion of the squadron showed the value of the training it had received at Madagascar, but the manœuvring of Admiral Nebogatov's ships left much to be desired.

In spite of the fact that the Baltic Fleet had actually arrived in the theatre of war its exact whereabouts were unknown to the Japanese, and the last news which had located it between Luzon and Formosa was a week old. Admiral Togo had, however, correctly diagnosed that his enemy would endeavour to pass through the Strait of Korea, and had made his dispositions accordingly. His fleet, which since the fall of Port Arthur at the beginning of the year, had been relieved of its blockading duties, had spent the intervening months in repairing defects and in bringing itself up to the highest state of preparation in expectation of the arrival of the Baltic Fleet. The main body of his own fleet was divided between Mesampo in the south of Korea and Osaki on the west coast of Tsushima, with his torpedo craft distributed equally between these two places. A division of cruisers, reinforced by some armed merchantmen, was occupied in reconnoitring the entrance to the Strait of Korea.

All through the night of the 26th-27th May the mist continued, and in the Russian fleet hope ran high that the most dangerous section of the passage might be effected without discovery. It was known that the Japanese were in the vicinity, for all night long the wireless operators in the Baltic Fleet were taking in messages between Japanese ships from which the position of the latter could be roughly located. But the hopes which had risen among the Russians were doomed to disappointment, for just about dawn an enemy armed merchantman almost ran into one of the Russian hospital ships. The Japanese vessel sheered off at once, but the changed character of the wireless messages intercepted by the Russians soon made it clear that the Baltic Fleet had been detected by the enemy. And any doubt which may have lingered was dissipated by the apparition of an enemy vessel on the starboard beam shortly afterwards. She was recognized to be the Japanese cruiser *Idzumi*, and, shadowed by her, the Baltic Fleet moved on until it was nearly abreast of the southern extremity of Tsushima. Between 8 and 10 a.m. eight more Japanese cruisers were sighted, and it now became evident to the Russians that the decisive moment could not be long postponed.

The Russian fleet was now moving in single column line ahead, with the armoured vessels disposed in three divisions. Leading the line was the First Division, which consisted of the battleships *Prince Suvorov*, *Emperor Alexander III*, *Borodino* and *Orel*, Admiral Rozhdestvensky flying his flag in the *Suvorov*. These four battleships were of modern construction, all launched either in 1901 or 1902, the displacement of each being 13,516 tons, and the nominal speed 17.6 knots. The Second Division was by no means so



homogeneous, and consisted of the battleship *Oslyabya* launched in 1898, and with a speed of 18.3 knots, two smaller battleships, the *Sissoi Veliki* and *Navarin*, launched in 1894 and 1891 respectively, and the old armoured cruiser, *Admiral Nakhimov*. The speed of this division was under 16 knots. The Third Division of Admiral Nebogatov was of little fighting value, and was made up of the sixteen-year old battleship, *Emperor Nicholas I*, and the three small armoured coast defence ships, *General-Admiral Apraxin*, *Admiral Ushakov* and *Admiral Senyavin*, the speed of the battleship being only 14 knots. The largest guns mounted on the coast defence ships were of 10-inch calibre, as was also the case with the *Oslyabya* in the Second Division, but the remainder of the vessels named above had a main armament of 12-inch guns.

Following astern were two useful cruisers, the *Oleg* and *Aurora*, the scout *Svyetlana*, and two fast but lightly armed ships, the *Ural* and *Almaz*. Disposed to starboard and astern of the main fleet were some half dozen naval transports, for although the Baltic Fleet was making for a naval base at Vladivostok it was forced to bring with it facilities for repair all the way from Europe. These transports were protected on their outer flank by two respectable veterans, the *Dmitri Donskoi* and the *Vladimir Monomakh*, both over twenty years old. Ahead, and also to starboard, were two small fast cruisers, the *Zhemchug* and *Izumrud*, and on the same side were also the nine destroyers in two divisions.

Exactly at twenty minutes past eleven the first shot of the battle was fired—an accidental one as it happened, for a gun on the *Orel* was discharged without orders. Unable, owing to the smokeless powder, to tell from which of the leading ships it had been



fired the vessels in rear took it as a signal from the flagship and opened against the Japanese light cruisers which were hovering about, some fifty cables off. The enemy cruisers turned to port and, firing also, rapidly drew off. The *Suvorov* then hoisted the signal, "Ammunition not to be wasted," and a few minutes later the crews were sent to dinner. At noon the Russian fleet was abreast of the most southerly point of the island of Tsushima and some twenty miles west of it, and course was now shaped for Vladivostok.

The bloodless encounter with the Japanese light cruisers was but the overture, and the curtain had yet to rise on the great drama of the sea of Japan. At the hour, 12 noon, when Admiral Rozhdestvensky altered course for the last stage of his long journey to Vladivostok, the main Japanese fleet had entered the Eastern Channel and was about thirty miles east of the northern extremity of Tsushima. The news of the discovery of the Russian fleet had been transmitted by wireless to Admiral Togo at about a quarter to five in the morning, and within an hour and a half the main portion of his fleet, under his own command, was steaming out of the inlet of Mesampo, while the 7th Division at Osaki, consisting of slower ships, was ordered to explore the Western Channel. The ships with Admiral Togo were the 1st, 2nd and 4th Divisions with a flotilla of destroyers, but owing to the heavy sea running it was decided to send these latter to shelter, and they proceeded accordingly to Muiri Bay, on the east coast of the island of Tsushima. The Japanese commander-in-chief passed north of the island, and then headed south down the Eastern Channel, being in constant receipt by wireless from his cruisers of the movements of his enemy. At 12 noon course was altered to the south-west, and collision with

the Baltic Fleet was now but a matter of an hour or so.

In the contest which was soon to be decided Admiral Togo had a very great superiority in cruisers and torpedo craft, but the weather conditions were unfavourable to the latter, and in any case it was upon his armoured ships that he must rely for a decisive victory. Here the superiority on the side of the Japanese was by no means so marked. The four battleships of the First Division of the Baltic Fleet were new ships ; and both in design and gun power were in no sense inferior to the four battleships which Japan possessed. To compare the eight armoured cruisers of Japan with the remaining Russian armoured vessels is difficult, owing to the disparity in design among the latter. In heavy guns the advantage lay with the Russians, a state of things reversed in the secondary armament. But though in material there might not seem much to choose between the rival fleets, there were some striking assets on the side of Japan. In speed their vessels surpassed their opponents by several knots, not only because they had recently been cleaned, whereas the Russian ships were foul after many months at sea, but also owing to the fact that many of the Russian ships were much beyond their designed draught. And in personnel the advantage was altogether with Japan. The professional skill of the Japanese officers was superior to that of the Russians, and the training, *moral* and discipline of the crews were likewise far ahead of that prevailing in the Russian ships. An enthusiasm and a confidence both in themselves and their cause reigned in the hearts of the Japanese sailors, while in the Russian fleet there were few, of any rank, who regarded the adventure otherwise in the light of a forlorn hope. Though the

decision was to be arrived at in 1905 the battle of Tsushima was really won years earlier. Like Prussia before 1866 Japan had, since the enforced surrender of Port Arthur, ceaselessly prepared herself for the struggle which she recognized as inevitable. Russia, on the other hand, had refused to take Japan seriously and had drifted into war in that spirit of casual unreadiness which has so often characterized her in history. In a word, on the 27th May, 1905, there were in the Korean Strait two fleets, one of which was an efficient fighting machine, while the other was a collection of ships.

To return to the story of the battle, at 1.20 p.m. from the bridge of the *Suvorov*, Admiral Rozhstvensky descried on the starboard bow six enemy ships, soon followed out of the mist by six more, steaming to cross the head of his line. They were the main portion of Admiral Togo's command from whose flagship flew the signal, "On this battle depends the rise or fall of our Empire. Do your utmost." Soon after they had crossed the head of the Russian fleet the Japanese turned to port and steamed parallel to the Russians, but in the opposite direction. On board the Baltic Fleet it was thought for the moment that the intention of Admiral Togo was to sweep round the rear of the Russian line and attack the transports on the starboard side. These conjectures were, however, soon set at rest, for the Japanese suddenly began to turn 16 points to port in succession, the manœuvre bringing them on a course the exact opposite to that on which they had been steaming. The manœuvre was observed with some amazement by the Russians, for it was a distinctly hazardous one. By turning in succession instead of together the Japanese had necessarily to occupy one small area of water with one ship the

whole period of the manœuvre and the target thus offered the Russians would be an easy one. Admiral Togo's reasons for accepting the risk are not clear, but the most likely explanation is that he determined to batter the head of the Baltic Fleet, and that he wished his own ship to be at the head of the Japanese line, instead of in rear, which would have been the case had his vessels executed the manœuvre of turning together.

The Russian flagship was not slow to take advantage of the opportunity unexpectedly offered her, and about ten minutes to two, before the third Japanese vessel had turned, the *Suvorov* fired her first shot at a range of between five and six thousand yards. Immediately the guns of the whole fleet thundered forth, and in a couple of minutes the Japanese began to reply, the *Oslabya*, which was leading the Second Division of the Baltic Fleet, coming in for some very severe pounding. Soon a like experience befell the *Suvorov*, for the Japanese ships, steaming 15 knots to the 10 of the Russian fleet, came up abreast of Admiral Rozhdestvensky's flagship and rained projectiles on it. The rapidity of the Japanese fire astounded the Russian officers, even those who had been in some of the earlier naval actions of the war, and the havoc wrought by the bursting of the shells convinced them that the enemy was employing some new and powerful explosive. It seemed to those on board the *Suvorov* as if mines and not shells were striking the ship's side and falling on the deck. The projectiles burst on impact, even when they encountered the least impediment to their flight. Soon the plates and superstructure on the upper deck of the *Suvorov* were torn to pieces. Iron ladders were crumpled up into rings. Guns were literally hurled from their mountings. Fires broke out

faster than they could be extinguished, and even hammocks and rows of boxes drenched with water burst into flames upon the deck.

With a view to bringing more fire to bear upon the *Mikasa*—Admiral Togo's flagship—the *Suvorov* turned to starboard at five minutes to two with the intention of bringing the Japanese flagship more abeam, but with their superior speed the enemy ships were able to counter the movement and began again to "cross the T," this time from port to starboard. The terrible fire which continued to be directed on the *Suvorov* was more than she could endure, and she edged away more and more to starboard to escape it. The damage which had been wrought on the Russian vessel was now very severe, and hundreds of her crew were out of action. The after turret blew up, and first one and then the second funnel fell. Her foremast was shot away, and she was on fire in several places. So battered was the *Suvorov* that she ceased to resemble a ship; yet even in her pitiful condition she never ceased firing with such guns as were serviceable, gallantly maintaining the fight against unequal odds in a manner worthy of the highest traditions of the Russian navy.

Serious as was her plight it was more than matched by that of the *Oslyabya*, which, at half-past two, was forced to quit the line. Soon afterwards her engines stopped and she took a severe list, presenting a terrible sight to her consorts as they passed. As she turned over to port hundreds of officers and men could be seen clinging to her side and bilge keels. Three Russian destroyers dashed up and, in spite of the hail of shells, succeeded in taking off part of her people, but before their task was completed the *Oslyabya* went down with over five hundred souls. Her end was brought

about by three shells of a salvo which struck her on the water-line under the forward turret, tearing in her hull not a hole "but a regular gateway," to use the description of one of her survivors. The *Oslyabya* had been the "unlucky" ship of the fleet throughout the whole voyage from Europe, and constant ill-fortune kept with her to the end.

Meanwhile Admiral Togo had altered course to the south-east, and his ships were firing rapidly into a confused mass of Russian vessels which had lost all formation. In his leeward position the smoke drifting from the numerous fires on board the Russian fleet hampered the Japanese gunners, and Admiral Togo turned again to cross the Russians' bows once more. It was now nearly three o'clock, and although the battle had lasted little more than an hour the defeat of the Russians was a foregone conclusion. With their superiority in speed, gunnery and manœuvring power the Japanese were "all over" their opponents, and Admiral Togo's chief concern now was to prevent any shattered remnant escaping northwards to Vladivostok. To the Russians was added the loss of their admiral and the enforced transfer of command. Admiral Rozhdestvensky had been severely wounded and was removed from the *Suvorov* by a Russian destroyer in an unconscious state, the command of the Baltic Fleet devolving upon Admiral Nebogatov.

But long before nightfall the battle was virtually at an end. The *Oslyabya* was already at the bottom, and before seven o'clock three more of the Russian battleships met the same fate. The *Emperor Alexander III*, badly battered, with a heavy list and lying so low that the water almost came into the portholes of the lower battery, kept firing with such guns as were serviceable; but the whole of her bows were torn away, and she



suddenly disappeared about half-past six, only four survivors from her being picked up. Not long afterwards the *Borodino* burst into flames and blew up. As for the *Suvorov* some Japanese cruisers came upon her, in the dusk, alone at some distance from the fight, heeling over badly and enveloped in smoke and flames from stem to stern. A division of destroyers was sent at once to attack her. But crippled, battered and burning though she was, and though she had but one gun—a 12-pounder—left serviceable, the indomitable Russian flagship still continued to fire, doggedly determined to defend herself to the last moment of her existence. Twice she was attacked and then sank with all hands, leaving behind her a memory of noble self-sacrifice of which any navy and any nation might be proud.

When night fell the darkness brought no respite for the Russian ships for one source of peril was but exchanged for another. Admiral Togo drew off with his main ships and left the field clear for his torpedo craft. The weather had now moderated, and the crews of these vessels, who had been chafing at their enforced inactivity all day, were now burning to show their mettle in action. Of the exact movements of the various units of both fleets throughout the night of the 27th-28th May it is impossible to give any detailed account; many of the reports are conflicting as to times and positions, and many of the logs from which information could have been gleaned have been lost for ever. After all no exact narrative is required; for the story of the remainder of the fight is but one long melancholy catalogue of Russian ships sunk and taken. During the night the battleship *Navarin* was sunk; and on the morrow the destruction of the Baltic Fleet was continued. The *Sissoi Veliki*, *Admiral Nakhimov*

and the *Svetlyana* met their end, the latter fighting gamely to the last, and during the morning Admiral Nebogatov's remnant was forced to surrender, and the battleships *Orel* and *Emperor Nicholas I*, with two of the old coast defence ships, fell into the hands of the Japanese. In the evening the *Admiral Ushakov*, after an honourable resistance, was sunk by gun fire.

The list of losses given above by no means completes the long tale of Russian disaster, but it would be wearisome to narrate the end of each individual vessel and a summary of the catastrophe is all that is required. Of the twelve ships which made up the three divisions of the Russian battle-line eight were sunk and the remaining four were captured. Of the cruisers four were sunk, one was run ashore and scuttled, three made good their escape to Manilla, where they were interned, and one solitary cruiser, the *Almaz*, thanks to her high speed, reached Vladivostok. Six special service vessels had accompanied the Baltic Fleet into action, and of these three were sunk, two escaped to Shanghai and were interned, while one reached Diego Suarez a month later. Of the Russian destroyers four were sunk, one was captured, one was interned at Shanghai, and two succeeded in reaching Vladivostok. The captured destroyer contained Admiral Rozhdestvensky and his staff; thus both he and his successor in command, Admiral Nebogatov, became prisoners of war. In effecting this complete destruction of the Russian fleet the Japanese suffered the loss of but three torpedo boats, and though several of their larger ships were damaged or had guns disabled all were perfectly fit for further service. The disparity in the losses of personnel is hardly less remarkable, for against the Japanese total of some 700 killed and wounded, the Russians had over 4,800 killed or

drowned, nearly 6,000, many of whom were wounded, taken prisoners, and over 1,800 officers and men interned in neutral countries. The battle of Tsushima thus ended in a catastrophe for the defeated side almost unparalleled in the history of naval war.

The ease with which the Japanese secured their victory and the fact that the issue of the battle corresponded with popular expectation are apt to lessen the importance of Tsushima and tend to relegate it to comparative obscurity. But reflection will show that in every accepted connotation of the term the epithet "decisive" is appropriate to the battle. It was beyond any shadow of doubt decisive in the sense that the victory was complete and indisputable. The Russians were *decisively* beaten, for Tsushima was no Jutland to afford each of the rival nations the opportunity of claiming victory and to lead to assertions and counter-assertions in which factors of material, *moral*, and strategic consequences have been put forward for consideration or rebuttal. Again, in the more limited and technical sense of the term "decisive," as indicating a battle the result of which had a marked and direct effect on bringing about an early termination of hostilities, Tsushima may with all truth be so described. It is doubtful if any other event in the war had a profounder effect upon the ruling classes in Russia. In Tsarist Russia the navy was the aristocratic service, and the ill-fated Baltic Fleet was officered largely by scions of great Russian families. The news of the disaster in Far Eastern waters was felt in all St. Petersburg society, and it led to a desire for an immediate termination of the war such as neither Liao-yang nor Port Arthur nor Mukden had produced.

These considerations, it may be urged, are based

but on a play upon a word the exact signification of which is open to some doubt. The real test as to the decisiveness of the battle of Tsushima is the question : Was it a battle to which a contrary result would materially have affected the history of the world ? To ask such a question is to answer it. Had the tables been turned and had the Japanese navy experienced the annihilation which overtook the Baltic Fleet, Japan would have been involved in one of the most frightful catastrophes in history. Her army locked up in Manchuria would have been deprived of munitions, reinforcements and supplies, and its surrender to the Russians must have been early and automatic, unless it succeeded in taking refuge in Chinese territory, a proceeding which Russia, with her influence over China, would probably have found means to counter. Had such surrender come about it is reasonable to suppose that Russia would have imposed such terms upon her enemy, would have wrested from her such strategic points, and would have imposed upon her such an indemnity as to have left Japan in a position of impotence for generations to come. The hegemony of the Far East would definitely have passed to Russia, her influence over China would have been consolidated and extended, and Russia, stretching from the Baltic to the Pacific, would have become the greatest of the Great Powers of the World.

## THE MARNE

6TH-10TH SEPTEMBER, 1914

SEE MAPS 7 AND 4

WHEN Europe recovered from the shock of the Franco-German War it was to find that the balance of power had not only been disturbed but lay shattered and in ruins, for the defeat of France, followed by the consolidation of Germany, under the hegemony of Prussia, had upset the whole European system. Germany, which had entered the war as two confederations, emerged as an empire, while France which had declared war as an empire made peace as a republic. It was not, however, so much the overwhelming German successes which astonished Europe as the method by which peace was secured. The completeness of the German victory had not been unparalleled in the past, but the world had grown accustomed to a winding-up of hostilities by a kind of shareholder's meeting, at which decisions were apt to be of the nature of a compromise and where every member present had a right to expect a hearing. After the Napoleonic wars it was a congress at Vienna which had redrawn the map of Europe, and after the Crimean War a similar congress at Paris had been attended not only by the participants in the struggle, but by interested Powers like Austria and Prussia. The conclusion of the Franco-German War was, however, marked by no such assembly. There was no congress at which the vanquished party

could endeavour to sow dissension amongst the victorious confederates or allies, nor where mere shareholders in the great European concern could assert their claims and demand their due. Although Europe was bound to be profoundly affected by the result of the war Germany admitted no one to her dealings with her beaten enemy. She put forward no terms to be discussed and mutilated in every chancellery in Europe. She merely laid down her ultimatum to which France, unfriended and alone, had no option but to agree.

As a result Germany started on the era which opened with 1871 with immense prestige. She had shown in the most convincing manner that she was the leading military Power in Europe. She unbuckled her armour in the sure belief that henceforth her word was law; that the sword was the divine arbiter of international disputes; and that the centre of gravity of the Continent was no longer Paris but Berlin. The very suddenness with which the long-desired unity had been secured brought about an intense and heady patriotism among the German people, and inspired them not only with unbounded confidence in their military prowess but with a conviction that they were of a superior race. A Teutonic cult arose which had for its votaries influential writers, statesmen and soldiers who fervently believed that Germany was henceforth to be the new model for the peoples of the earth. But though they knew it not, the Germany which these apostles extolled had been completely transformed in the crucible of victory. The old Germany—the Germany of the idealist, of the philosopher, and of the single-minded student, the Germany of Leibnitz, of Goethe and of Beethoven—had gone for ever, and in its place was a Germany nourished on



the congenial diet of blood and iron. The truth is that while Germany was conquering France Prussia had been conquering Germany, and centralization of authority, super-organization, rigid efficiency and order henceforth became the watchwords of the German people. Traits which formerly had been characteristic of Prussia alone soon became to belong to the whole German Empire, and the success which had attended their possession aroused in all Germany a consciousness that she had a world mission to fulfil. A campaign was initiated which had for its aim the arousing in the German people of a desire for world dominion. Other races, it was contended, had already accomplished their destiny and were therefore in decline. France had been proved effete in the trial of battle; the English were losing their grip on affairs; and the Russians were barbarians and a menace to the world. Germany's mission, therefore, was to establish her *Kultur* or system of civilization, and in this national effort the use of force was not only advisable but a duty. In the fulfilment of her stupendous and self-imposed rôle Germany must expose herself freely to every risk, for in her case it was to be "World Power or Down-fall."

These ambitions, however, were kept within bounds for a time; for strong as was the position of Germany it was by no means unassailable, and the Europe after 1871 possessed many features which made her put her dreams aside. The marvellous recuperative power displayed by France was an unexpected and serious problem; the war indemnity of £200,000,000, so far from increasing the wealth of Germany, brought about a period of inflated prices and over-production, followed by depression and collapse; in religious affairs the new dogma of Papal Infallibility caused serious trouble to

Germany in general and to Prussia in particular. And over and above these special features was the permanent ethnographic division of Europe into Teutonic, Slav, Latin and Islamic Powers which, in addition to the simple and direct racial antagonisms, by a permutation and combination of interests complicated the whole of European statecraft. To the antagonism existing between one group and another there were added the no less bitter rivalries within the groups themselves—the differences of the various Balkan States among the Slavs, or the differences between Germany and England in the Teutonic, or between France and Italy in the Latin group. Added to these sources of unrest was one which threatened to outmatch them all. Various signs seemed to point to Socialism as the common enemy, and whether known as Nihilism or Anarchism or Internationalism the doctrines of revolution caused uneasiness in every continental Power and not least in the great military German Empire.

The one man in Germany who saw clearly what to put aside as visionary and what to grasp as essential for German interests was Bismarck, whose policy for two decades bestrode the Continent like a Colossus. His constant aim was to conserve the German unity, which he had brought about, and his statecraft was guided by two dominant ideas—alliance with Russia and the isolation of France. Both projects failed, though through no fault of Bismarck's, and from the political point of view few occurrences were of more import than the secession of Russia from close connection with Germany and her ultimate adhesion as an ally to France. By a careful exploitation of the bogey of the red flag Bismarck had, for a time, induced Russia to come into line. In September, 1872, the

Tsar and the Emperor of Austria visited Berlin, where they were most cordially received, and in conjunction with the German Emperor concluded what was in effect a new Holy Alliance. Apart from their resolve to repress revolutionary movements in Europe the three sovereigns agreed to recognize the boundaries as laid down after the Franco-German War, and to act in concert in the settlement of problems arising from the tangled Eastern Question. Bismarck could now breathe more freely, but soon the League of the Three Emperors displayed an ominous lack of solidity and failed to stand the strain of the year 1875. In that year the recovery of France from her wounds was well-nigh complete, and there was some excitement in Germany over the possibility of a war of revenge. The military party at Berlin pressed on the Emperor William I the absolute necessity of striking promptly, but the French forwarded to Alexander II proofs of the hostile designs of the German military chiefs, which drew from the Tsar the reply that he would prevent an unprovoked attack on France. The militarists thus defeated their own ends, for Russia was now inclined to stand aloof from Germany and to look with sympathy on the position of the French.

While Bismarck held the reins of power his efforts to attach Russia to Germany were continued, but it was almost impossible for these efforts to succeed so long as it was found necessary for Germany to throw herself whole-heartedly on the side of Austria. When the Congress of Berlin assembled to deal with the tangle of the Eastern Question in 1878 the Three Emperors' League was again rudely shaken, owing to the support which Germany gave Austria on the question of limiting Russia's influence in the Balkans. The more Germany was drawn to Austria the further

Russia drifted away, and although the three Emperors met in friendly intercourse in 1881, 1884 and 1885 it was becoming clear to Russia that she must look elsewhere for her friends. The climax came when William II ascended the throne of Germany in 1888. At once he signalized the event in characteristic oratory by proclaiming to his soldiers that he swore ever to remember that the eyes of his ancestors were looking down upon him from the other world, and that he would one day have to render account to them of the honour and glory of his army. The world had not yet learned to assess the utterances of this hare-brained megalomaniac at their real value, and not only in France but in Russia there was considerable uneasiness. Both countries took immediate precautionary measures, and French money in the form of loans poured into Russia. Three years later the French fleet received an effusive welcome at Cronstadt, and in 1895 the Franco-Russian Entente ripened into a definite alliance. After nine years more there occurred the most important event of modern diplomacy—the conclusion of the Anglo-French Entente, to be followed in 1907 by a friendly arrangement between England and Russia.

Thus England, now joined to France and Russia, transformed the Dual Alliance into the Triple Entente or friendly understanding among the three nations. Opposed to this was another and more solid coalition, the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy. The last-named had joined the Central Powers out of no love for either but out of pique with France, who, at Bismarck's instigation, had established herself in Tunis on which Italy had for years cast a longing eye.

The Triple Alliance had come into being in 1882 and was the culmination of Bismarck's long and astute

statecraft, though his decision to back Austria instead of Russia, when it became necessary to side with one or the other, has caused his policy to be questioned by experts in diplomacy. It was certainly the negation of one cardinal factor of Bismarck's policy—friendship with Russia—and it brought about that which he had always feared, the combination of hostile neighbours east and west. Russia by herself he had never feared, but France and Russia in conjunction—the war on two fronts—had weighed like lead on his and Moltke's minds. And the possibility of this combination of France and Russia being reinforced by the strength of England was one which, had he lived, he would surely have made the most strenuous efforts to avoid.

There were thus in the opening years of the twentieth century two potential causes of a great European outbreak—the conviction of Germany that it was her mission to disseminate her boasted *Kultur* and her fury at what she called the *Einkreisungs Politik* or encirclement policy of her neighbours. Of these two features the latter was by far the more serious. The missionary zeal of Germany was the callow enthusiasm of an inexperienced Power (for although as a people the Germans had immemorial claims, as a united nation Germany was but a thing of yesterday) and might be trusted to wear off in time ; and although it had its selfish and braggart aspect it had, after all, a weak strain of grandeur. But the rage which Germany felt at being almost entirely surrounded by unfriendly Powers was quite another matter. A strong missionary Germany might be excessively objectionable and even troublesome ; but a strong, angry and frightened Germany could easily be a very serious danger.

These two factors, however, by no means exhausted the possible sources of European trouble, and perhaps



nothing had more to do with bringing about the great upheaval of 1914 than the Near Eastern question. Here Germany and Austria had common interests and ambitions directly opposed to the interests and ambitions of Russia and England. Driven from Italy and expelled from Germany, Austria had sought to find compensation by expansion in the Balkans, and a policy known as the *Drang nach Osten* was inaugurated by her with the object of securing a port on the *Ægean*. In the way stood Serbia and Montenegro, who could count on the assistance of Russia to oppose the extension of Austrian influence among the Slav states of the peninsula. Hence Austria leaned heavily on Germany, without whose backing her new policy could have made but little headway. As for Germany the possibility of a Slav upheaval in the territories of Austria-Hungary threatened to rob her of her best ally, and from motives of policy she therefore vigorously supported Austria in her struggle with the Slavs, both inside and outside of her dominions. But while acting as the ally of Austria Germany had her own axe to grind. After Bismarck's death the views of Germany on Eastern affairs had undergone a marked change ; no longer were they considered of less value than the bones of a Pomeranian grenadier, but were held to be of great importance to Germany's destiny. An intense interest was displayed in the fate of Turkey, and Germany quickly assumed a leading rôle in Ottoman affairs. The goal of her ambitions lay not in European but in Asiatic Turkey, where she planned to secure economic control of Mesopotamia, which offered a rich field for the investment of German capital. To get concessions from the Porte to exploit this region it was necessary that German policy should become supreme at Constantinople, and studied efforts



were made to cultivate the friendship of the Turks. The Turkish army was reorganized by German hands and Turkish officers were sent for instruction to German military schools.

The Emperor William paid two visits to the Sultan, in 1889 and 1898—the first European sovereign to be received as a guest by an Ottoman Sultan—and during his second visit the Kaiser, who had no Mohammedan subjects of his own, grandiloquently declared himself the protector of the hundreds of millions of Moslems of the world. Following this second visit of the Emperor William the Sultan granted a concession to a group of German capitalists to continue the Anatolian railway to Baghdad, and from thence to the Persian Gulf, and this projected “B.B.B.,” or Berlin-Byzantium-Baghdad, railroad aroused great enthusiasm in Germany. The policy of that country was now clearly to connect the Baltic with the Persian Gulf through a corridor beginning at Berlin, running to Vienna, thence to Constantinople, from there to Baghdad and finally to the Persian Gulf. Should this dream materialize Germany would become mistress of an immense region, comprising Central and South-Eastern Europe and the whole of Asia Minor, from which she could draw rich tribute.

Meanwhile Germany’s “brilliant second” Austria had by the year 1903 become so far mistress of the Balkans as to render the passage, in case of need, of German and Austrian troops through Constantinople and Asia Minor a comparatively simple matter; and the collapse of Russia in her war with Japan emboldened the Central Powers to push on with their designs. Germany fastened her grip on the Turkish Government, exploited the resources of Asia Minor, and posed as the champion of the Moslem creed. The

Pan-Islamic movement was carefully fomented by German agents for German ends. The Emperor William II took steps to encourage the "true believers" and to strengthen the Sultan by the construction of a branch line of the Baghdad system southwards through Aleppo and the district east of the Dead Sea towards Mecca. Menacing as they did the security of Egypt and the Suez Canal these projected lines caused irritation in England, and the general aggressiveness of the German Emperor's schemes made England, France and Russia draw closer for mutual support. The Young Turk revolution in 1908 was also exploited for Teutonic ends, for, taking advantage of the general confusion in the Balkans, Austria announced the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Her action was in flat violation of the Treaty of Berlin by which the region was assigned to her merely for administration, and strenuous protests were made by Serbia, while Russia was indignant at what she regarded as a blow aimed at the Slavic race by a Teutonic Power. But to the side of Austria sprang Germany, "like a knight in shining armour," and Russia with her army in process of reorganization had to submit.

The grandiose aims of Germany in Asia were the negation of the policy of Bismarck who had now been ten years in his grave. A confirmed continentalist, Bismarck's attention had always been firmly riveted on Germany's situation in Europe; and to him an alliance between Russia and France and the closing of the breach between Russia and England spelled the ruin of the true system of European policy. But the generation which had grown up in Germany after 1870 aspired to make Germany not merely a continental but a world Power, and its Asiatic aspirations made England rather than France or Russia the real

rival of the Fatherland. To the rivalry engendered by the *Drang nach Osten* there was added the competition in colonial expansion with the rivalry in naval strength which followed as the certain sequel. It was inevitable that after 1871 Germany should begin to take an interest in colonial expansion. She had no colonies at that time, and for a State that had proved itself the strongest Power on the Continent the lack of the possibility of expansion was an anomaly ; and, if it was an anomaly in 1871, to German minds, ten years later, it was an outrage. By 1880 the increase in population, wealth, commerce and maritime trade of Germany was immense, and it was natural that the German trader should seek outlets for his capital and markets outside Europe. He did so, and from the commercial point of view, with success ; but everywhere he found the white ensign of England ; even the tricolour of France which he had defeated and despised was, year after year, hoisted in new regions outside France. But no German flag flew even where trade was in German hands or where the unknown spaces of the earth had been explored by German effort. The trader might console his outraged sense of nationality with a satisfactory balance sheet, but for the German Government the situation had its humiliation—the German emigrant was lost to Germany because there was no Germany outside Europe.

This growing need of room for expansion for the German people aroused strong feeling in favour of securing colonies ; and the occupation of Tunis by France in 1881 and the intervention of England in Egypt in the following year strengthened the hands of the German " colonial party." In 1884, in the great scramble for Africa which marked the closing years of the nineteenth century, Germany was well to the fore.

In the east she secured German East Africa, wedged in between British possessions on the north and south ; and in the west German South-West Africa, Kamerun and Togoland. And inevitably the extension of the German Empire overseas led to the conviction that the naval strength of Germany must be increased. It gave the Emperor William II occasion for his oratory in which he emphasized the need for Germany of a navy if she were to maintain her position as a world Power. The trend of his new policy is revealed in the sentiments : " Our future lies on the water," and " The trident must be in our fist," two of his oft-quoted and characteristic phrases. Navy leagues, founded under imperial patronage, began a persistent and enthusiastic propaganda in favour of a larger fleet. And in the preamble to the first great navy law which passed the Reichstag in 1900 occurred the significant words, " Germany must possess a fleet of such strength that a war against the mightiest naval Power would endanger the supremacy of that Power." Soon Germany came to have the second largest navy in the world, and the fortification of Heligoland and the completion of the Kiel canal were most valuable assets to her naval strength.

The scramble for Africa had led to no collision between the participators, and, indeed, in the case of England and Germany there had been an amicable bartering of Heligoland for Zanzibar. But early in the twentieth century the situation was darkened by contention over Morocco. Unsatisfied with her gains in Africa, and ever on the look-out for new colonies, Germany saw in Morocco an excellent field for expansion. In that country German capitalists succeeded in securing concessions from the Sultan and some of the tribal chiefs. France, however, had also eyes on

Morocco, and had already begun a policy of peaceful penetration from Algiers. An attack by the semi-civilized tribes of the interior upon French subjects led to punitive expeditions, and it looked as if Morocco would become a possession of France ; but Germany intervened like a *deus ex machina* on the side of the Sultan to whom the Emperor William paid a visit in 1905, pointedly recognizing him as an independent sovereign. This challenge to France paved the way for the congress of Algeciras in the following year, the result of which was to some extent a triumph for Germany, for the annexation of Morocco was forbidden, and in theory at least the policy of the open door was established. But the France of the twentieth century was no longer the France of 1871. Satisfied that her claims to Morocco were superior to any that Germany could adduce, and fortified by the conclusion of the Triple Entente she took a firm stand. In 1911, after French troops had aided the Sultan to put down a rising in the country, France refused to withdraw them until order should have been permanently established. Germany retorted by sending a gunboat, and later a cruiser, to Agadir. Feeling ran high in both countries, and Europe trembled on the brink of war. England, however, came forward as a supporter of the French claims, and Germany retired from the Morocco quarrel the richer by a large slice of the French Congo, but smarting under the recollection of a stinging diplomatic rebuff.

The baffled fury of Germany knew no bounds. The Colonial Minister at once resigned. In the Reichstag fiery Anglophobe speeches were greeted with boisterous signs of approval by the Crown Prince. Even in Berlin itself one journal so far forgot the proprieties due to crowned heads as to call the Kaiser *ce misérable*



*poltron*. As a protector of Moslems the Emperor had shown that his vaunted protection was of but small avail, although there was still the possibility of retrieving his reputation among Mohammedans in the Near and Middle East. On the Eastern Question, indeed, now hung the hopes of Germany and of Austria, but that question had now produced a situation such as to throw the late Moroccan incident into the shade. In 1912 Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro formed an alliance with the object of making war upon their ancient enemy Turkey. The magnitude of the menace to the peace of Europe staggered the Great Powers, causing them for the moment to put aside their recent differences and to combine in admonishing the allies not to press their claims since no territorial changes would be permitted in European Turkey. The belligerent states scouted the advice and war was declared in October. After a brilliant succession of victories on the part of the allies the Turks were driven to seek refuge behind the fortress of Tchatalja which barred the way to Constantinople. Following the failure of peace efforts the Treaty of London was signed in May, 1913; but two months later a second Balkan war broke out, this time between Bulgaria and her former allies. At the instance of Austria hostilities were finally brought to a close by the Treaty of Bucharest in August, 1913.

Coming as it did so soon after the Moroccan crisis these events in the Balkans shook the nerves of Europe and left the Powers, both great and small, the prey to mutual hatred and distrust. Serbia had at last reached the sea, and she wished to divide Albania with Montenegro. But strenuous objections were raised by Austria, who feared that the expansion of Serbia might block her march to the Ægean, and by Italy who had



ambitions of her own concerning the eastern shores of the Adriatic. Finally, the Serbians were induced to evacuate Durazzo and the Montenegrins marched out of Scutari. The Teutonic Powers thus secured a diplomatic victory, but it was at the expense of increased hatred on the part of Serbia and of the angry resentment of Russia over another injustice to the Slavs. And the victory was discounted by the military failure of Turkey who had been Germany's favourite pupil, as well as by the fact that although Serbia's wings had been clipped she was, nevertheless, a vastly larger State than she had been before the war.

The common opinion in 1913 was that Europe could not stand another crisis. All Europe was shrouded in an atmosphere of suspicion and of hate. Germany hated England, for her success, for her colonies, and for her naval strength in general; and for her recent attitude in supporting France in particular. The British people did not actively hate the Germans, but they were irritated over the continued rattling of the German sabre; they disliked the Emperor for his interference in South African affairs and they despised him for his amateurishness and rant. France still hated Germany for the robbery of Alsace and Lorraine; and Germany hated France for the humiliation which the latter had wrought upon her in Morocco. Russia hated both Germany and Austria for their interference with weak Slav States; while Austria hated Serbia, and Serbia hated Austria with the hatred of rivals both striving for and both disappointed in their struggle for the same goal—an outlet on the Ægean. Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria all hated Turkey; they distrusted one another, and Bulgaria hated her three erstwhile allies who, maddened by her treacherous attack which led to the Second Balkan War, robbed

her of the fruits of her great victories of the former struggle. So saturated, indeed, was the political atmosphere of Europe with the mixture of hatred and distrust that it needed but a chance detonation to bring about a catastrophe at any moment.

Within a twelvemonth the spark was caused in Bosnia which was to set all Europe in a blaze. On Sunday, June 28th, 1914, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria, arrived at Sarajevo, the capital of the province, to inspect the troops there quartered. The population of Bosnia was overwhelmingly Slav, both in race and sympathy, and the recent action of Austria in frustrating Slav ideals had aroused an extra bitterness against her. The visit of the Archduke was therefore unwelcome, and by a regrettable coincidence it took place on the anniversary of the great battle of Kossovo, a day for centuries sacred to Slav national ideals. On this fateful 28th June anti-Austrian sentiment culminated in the assassination of the Archduke and his wife by a Bosnian student. A thrill of horror ran through Europe, but it soon subsided and the Bosnian tragedy seemed destined to be but a nine days' wonder. Austria, however, was convinced that the outrage was the outcome of anti-Austrian propaganda in Serbia, and presented to that State a peremptory ultimatum on July 23rd. The terms were harsh in the extreme and such as no sovereign State could comply with except at the cost of her sovereignty and status. In her perplexity Serbia had recourse to Russia, the traditional protector of the Slav race; and on the advice of her ally she forwarded a reply within forty-eight hours accepting all Austria's demands with but two reservations. Austria's answer was to withdraw her ambassador, and two days later she declared war.

The whole of Europe was instantly on the alert and the Great Powers found themselves compelled to support or repudiate Austria's action. Russia was disinclined to stand aside and witness the humiliation of her protégé, and France felt bound to stand by Russia, although her direct interests in Serbia were infinitesimal. On the other side, Germany and Italy were leagued with Austria by the terms of the Triple Alliance. England, though bound to neither side, had, nevertheless, concluded an entente with France and Russia. Thus five Great Powers, and possibly six, were confronted with the possibility of immediate war, and by the 29th July the political tension of Europe was almost at breaking-point. Austria was, indeed, actually at war with Serbia and was bombarding the Serbian capital Belgrade. England had dispatched part of her navy to sea, while holding all her squadrons in a state of instant readiness. Belgium, unfortunately caught in the midst of a scheme of army reorganization, was hurriedly preparing herself for eventualities. Germany had recalled her High Seas Fleet ; German troops in Metz had been hurried forward to the frontier ; and the German people were withdrawing their deposits from the banks in frantic haste. Russia was mobilizing her southern armies, while France was anxiously enquiring of England what the action of the latter would be in the case of a general European war.

To the earnest solicitations of England and Russia that a conference of the Powers should be convened to solve the Balkan difficulty Germany turned a deaf ear ; and to a definite question from England whether in the event of war she would respect the neutrality of Belgium an evasive reply was returned. The situation was now almost hopeless, and was made completely so when, at five o'clock on the afternoon of August 1st,

Germany declared war on Russia. France immediately ordered a general mobilization. The following evening Germany demanded from Belgium passage for her troops through Belgian territory, an outrageous request which the Belgian Government refused. The King of the Belgians then appealed to England for assistance, and instructions were telegraphed to the British ambassador in Berlin to obtain from the German Government an assurance that the neutrality of Belgium would be respected. Midnight was the time limit fixed for Germany's answer, and as none was vouchsafed, the ambassador asked for his passports and England and Germany were at war. Little more than a week had elapsed since Austria's ultimatum to Serbia and eight nations were now engaged. On one side were Germany and Austria ; on the other France, Russia, England, Belgium, Serbia and Montenegro. Other Powers were yet to intervene, but even by the 4th August, 1914, the arena was so full as to justify the belief that Armageddon had arrived.

The decision of Germany to move her legions through Belgian territory was the result of no sudden impulse on her part, but had been accepted in principle for over twenty years. No sooner had the Franco-German war come to an end than the German strategists were forced to consider the action of the Fatherland in a future European war. For a time Moltke considered that, in the event of a hostile combination of France and Russia, Germany could unhesitatingly accept the challenge and retort by an offensive on both fronts ; but the recuperation of France in an unexpectedly brief space of time ruled such a proposal out of court. Germany could no longer count upon being able to aim her blows simultaneously right and left, and a decision had to be arrived at as to which front should

witness a German offensive, and which should be marked by a holding or defensive policy. At first it was decided that the offensive was to be directed against France ; but in 1880 a reversal of the strategic plan took place, and it was laid down that the main offensive should be made against Russia, while a defensive policy should be observed in the west. When, however, Count von Waldersee was succeeded by Count von Schlieffen in 1891 as Chief of the Staff, another change in the strategic plan of Germany took place, for Schlieffen reverted to the earlier method of seeking a rapid decision in the west and of confining the German effort for the moment to a defensive in the east.

To carry out this project wholeheartedly it was necessary to concentrate the maximum force for the attack against France, while leaving merely an irreducible minimum, aided by Austria, in the east ; while, in view of the strength of the French fortified front and of the constricted space between Luxemburg and the Swiss frontier, the German Great General Staff considered that success could be achieved only by violating the neutrality of Belgium and marching troops through that country. Germany's effort against France was thus to take the shape of a great out-flanking movement by the German right wing descending into Northern France, and it was a cardinal feature of the plan that France should be beaten to her knees before the more slowly mobilizing Russians had got into their stride. After a victorious campaign, which should not consume more than six weeks, the bulk of the German troops was to be hurried eastwards to deal with Russia, and by this method Germany, taking advantage of her central position, her war readiness and her perfected railway system, would



crush her enemies in detail. The plan was, however, destined to fail owing, in part, to the surprisingly rapid mobilization of part of Russia's forces, but chiefly owing to the great decisive battle of the Marne.

The German forces for the western campaign formed up on a frontage which extended from about Aix-la-Chapelle to the Swiss frontier, in the following order. On the extreme right was the First Army of General von Kluck assembled in the Aix-la-Chapelle region. On its left was the Second Army of General von Bülow about Malmédy, and south of that again was the Third Saxon Army, under General von Hausen. These three armies were those assigned for the march through Belgium and the envelopment of the French from the north. The Fourth Army, under the Duke of Württemberg, carried on the line and was concentrated in position to direct its march towards the Semois and the southern Ardennes. Next to it was the Fifth Army of the German Crown Prince, based on Trèves, and looking towards the gap of Stenay. Further to the left were the Sixth and Seventh Armies, commanded by the Crown Prince of Bavaria and General von Heeringen respectively, the line being finished off by a detachment under General von Deimling in the neighbourhood of Colmar.

The plan on which the German advance in 1914 was based had been drawn up by Schlieffen, the Chief of the General Staff, in 1905, and was as follows: the First, Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Armies, pivoting on the fortified area Metz-Thionville, were to make a great left wheel through Luxembourg and Belgium, enter France from the north, and envelop the left wing of the French armies; and, should the French fall back to a position with the fortress of Paris as the left, the capital was to be turned by forces pushed



west and south of it, and the French field armies were to be driven eastwards against the Swiss frontier ; the capital being meanwhile invested by twelve Ersatz divisions specially earmarked for the purpose. As for the remaining two German armies, the Sixth and Seventh, they were, in the main, to hold the French on the upper Moselle and, by so doing, they were to prevent the possibility of French units being transferred to the other end of the line to oppose the great enveloping movement from the north. The essence of Schlieffen's scheme was that the maximum of strength should be given to the right wing, while the left should be little more than a screen which in case of attack by superior numbers might even have to give ground. All through his life he stuck to this opinion, and on his death-bed murmured, " Only keep the right wing strong."

In principle the plan was adopted by his successor General von Moltke, nephew of the great strategist of 1866 and 1870, but with an important difference as to the proportion of strength between the right and left wing. Whereas Schlieffen had earmarked only nine divisions for the front between Metz and Switzerland, in order to dispose of every available man upon the right, Moltke the Younger, by allotting new formations to the left, gradually strengthened the forces south of Metz until about a quarter of the entire German numbers had been allotted to the Alsace and Lorraine sector. It seems that he hoped, *pari passu* with the advance of the enveloping movement through Belgium, to bring about a great victory in Lorraine, after which the bulk of the Sixth and Seventh Armies could be railed to the right wing to add their weight in a decisive battle near Paris. All through the period dealt with in this chapter Moltke toyed with the idea

of being strong on both flanks with the result that, when the crisis came, the right wing—where every man was urgently required—was weaker than it should have been.<sup>1</sup>

For a time, however, the German plan seemed to promise absolute success. The right wing entering Belgium was, indeed, checked at Liège; but in a week that place was taken and Namur fell shortly afterwards, the whole Belgian field army, meanwhile, seeking refuge behind the fortifications of Antwerp. Strangely enough the French Higher Command seem not to have anticipated the German enveloping movement from the north and time was lost by unsuccessful efforts south of Metz, undertaken with the political object of showing the flag in the lost provinces. The failure necessitated a modification in the plans of General Joffre, the French commander-in-chief, and realizing at last that the main effort of the Germans was to be made by their right wing he prescribed the defensive for his own right, while the offensive was to be undertaken by the centre and left, the extreme left, except for some second line units, being now formed by the British Expeditionary Force. The offensive began on the 22nd August, but here again failure dogged the efforts of the French. The attack of the Third and Fourth Armies in the centre collapsed east of the Meuse, and the failure had the effect of isolating the left wing formed by the Fifth and British Armies in the zone Charleroi-Mons. Even then the cup of failure had not been completely drained. General

<sup>1</sup> In a biography of von Schlieffen, recently published, it is suggested that he might have disposed of the new formations as Moltke did: i.e. by posting them in Lorraine. On the other hand, it might equally be argued that, in view of the reinforcement of the French left by the British Army, he might have added these new formations to the German right. All that is certain is that Schlieffen wished "to have the right wing strong."

Joffre's fresh plan of regrouping the Allied forces and strengthening his left wing with a new Sixth Army made up of units drawn from his right, so as to take the offensive with this newly formed mass of manœuvre could not be carried out. Although the British delayed the Germans at Le Cateau on the 26th, and the French Fifth Army inflicted a smart defeat on the enemy at Guise on the 29th, the onrush of the German right wing could not be stayed. On the last day of August Amiens fell; the British were cut off from their bases in the Channel ports; and it was found necessary to withdraw the whole allied line, with its right pivoting on the fortress of Verdun. Paris was now obviously in danger, and the newly formed French Sixth Army and a cavalry corps were sent back to the capital where they were to come under the orders of General Galliéni, the Military Governor of the city.

By the end of August, 1914, General Joffre was, beyond all doubt, a defeated commander. The accumulation of allied failures had forced him more than once to change his plans, and more than once the change was made rather with the object of parrying than of inflicting a blow. On the other hand, no single defeat nor even the sum total of all of them was decisive; and even the succession of failures was not unredeemed by victory. At Guise and in the east of France the French armies had already belied the mournful verdict, "the French soldier has lost the offensive spirit." Nevertheless, these reassuring incidents could not hide the fact that at every step southward the Allies were abandoning more and more French soil to the invaders, and that the continuation of the retreat must imply abandoning Paris to its fate. For the moment, indeed, it had been proposed to declare

the capital a *ville ouverte*, but at the instance of the leading ministers and citizens the decision was reversed.

In her surging sea of sorrow France had yet one spar to cling to—the unyielding determination of General Joffre to resume the offensive at the earliest possible moment. His retirement had but one object—to gain the protection of some obstacle which would grant his troops temporary respite during which reorganization could take place and wastage might be made good preparatory to attack. The nearest zone which seemed to promise the necessary protection was the country immediately south of the Rivers Seine, Aube and Ornain, and it was laid down as the goal to be attained. A withdrawal so far south would imply the complete isolation of Paris, but General Joffre was under no illusion about the fact that it was by a victory in the field, and by that alone, that the capital could be saved.

Although the situation of the French was critical in the closing days of August, 1914, that of the Germans was not without anxiety, and this in spite of the almost uninterrupted series of victories which had marked their entry into France. The cardinal feature of their plan of operations was that France was to be brought to her knees within six weeks ; but now when two-thirds of that period had passed the French and British Armies were still holding the invaders at arm's length. The German plan of envelopment from the north was with the view of outflanking the Allies and of forcing them against the Swiss frontier—a vast operation which involved the handling of immense masses of men and a supreme direction of consummate skill which proved too much for the powers of the German Higher Command. Already the German military chiefs were revealing their inability for the colossal

task, for at a time when it was essential that General Headquarters should be so situated as to be able to control the vast front with the minimum of delay, they were actually located some hundred miles in rear of the right wing. Peace manœuvres had led to excessive reliance on wireless telegraphy, which now fell far short of expectation and worked incredibly slowly in the field. To counteract its failure motor-cars were freely used for the transmission of orders, but on the whole the system of communication left much to be desired, and effective control was absent. Further, the ever-lengthening lines of communication and supply were adding to the difficulties of the invaders and slowly but surely sapping their strength. The fortress of Maubeuge, too, still held out, and the retention of that place by the French denied to the Germans a sorely needed line of railway. The inevitable wastage resulting from a rapid advance in trying weather had made itself clearly felt, and in the cavalry the loss in horseflesh was particularly severe. A serious drain on the total German strength was also caused by the necessity of leaving two corps to mask Antwerp, where the Belgian Army was still in being, and by the temporary loss of another corps to besiege Maubeuge. More serious still the unexpected invasion of East Prussia by a Russian army had led to the despatch of two corps from the Western Front, one of which was taken from the right wing where every man was urgently required. And not only was the right wing weakened by having to provide troops for Belgium and East Prussia ; it was also denuded of Ersatz divisions and heavy batteries to assist in an attempt to take the Grand Couronné of Nancy at the other flank of the German line. By the end of August at German General Headquarters there had doubtless



made itself felt the chill suspicion that they had insufficient troops to carry out their grandiose plan; certainly the directive issued on the 28th August brought to light the serious extension of the right wing.

On that date the Germans were slightly in advance of their prearranged time-table, and a case which had been foreseen had apparently arisen, i.e. the French might form a defensive flank with its left on the fortress of Paris. Everything was therefore "according to plan," and it was necessary merely to issue the orders which had been contemplated for the eventuality of "turning" Paris and of forcing the French armies eastwards towards Switzerland. Accordingly the Second Army with the 1st Cavalry Corps was to advance on Paris, while the First Army with the Second Cavalry Corps was to march west of the Oise towards the lower Seine. There was already a gap between von Bülow's Second Army and the Third Army on his left, and there was also a gap, and an increasing one, between him and General von Kluck's First Army on the right. Von Bülow was a commander of the old school with a predilection for the close order of the 1870 days, and the prospect of advancing against a great fortress with his flanks uncovered apparently disconcerted him, and his uneasiness was not assuaged by the attack made upon him by the French Fifth Army at Guise on the 29th. Wireless appeals were sent out by him to the Third and First Armies to close inwards to his assistance.

General von Kluck agreed with alacrity. Ever since the battle of Le Cateau on the 26th he had been engaged on a wild-goose chase, for instead of following up the exhausted British Second Corps he had plunged south-west in a fruitless attempt to surround it. Von Kluck was, therefore, glad of any opportunity for



attacking a new prey, and decided to wheel inwards so as to attack the left flank and rear of the French in front of von Bülow. He reported his decision to Supreme Headquarters, and late on the 30th August there came the reply approving of the proposal. Whether it was that Supreme Headquarters had completely lost control of the battle and allowed their hand to be forced by von Kluck ; or whether it was they realized that the right wing had become too extended ; or whether the absence of the British Army from the battle of Guise led them to imagine that it was finally done with, and that the wide sweep round Paris was no longer necessary, is not quite clear. At any rate, Paris was now cut out of the plan ; the French forces in front of von Bülow were given as the new objective ; and the rolling up of the French armies was to begin from the east and not from the west of Paris.

Press censorship was a vastly different matter in 1914 from what it had been in the Franco-German War, and unlike the flank march of MacMahon, which had been the subject of discussion in every service club in Europe so soon as it had begun, no whisper of the *glissement* of the German First Army reached Paris for some days. Inside the capital General Galliéni was labouring with feverish energy to make good the deficiencies of defence caused by the apathy of successive French Governments, and as late as September 2nd it was believed that the arrival of the Germans at the gates of Paris must be a matter of but a few hours. The United States Embassy had been formally notified by the German Government of the approaching entry, and arrangements had been made for providing American citizens with safeguards in the form of proclamations to be affixed to their residences. The 3rd September was spent by General Galliéni in

putting the finishing touches to the arrangements for defence which he had improvised from the troops and means at his disposal, but by the evening of that day the true situation was revealed. Intelligence transmitted from aeroplanes and by cavalry patrols showed that the German right wing had swerved aside from Paris, and that the main body of General von Kluck's Army was heading south-east across the city towards the point of union of the British and French Fifth Armies.

For the moment Paris was safe, but, even so, General Galliéni found himself in a position which called for exceptional powers of judgment and rapidity of decision. His mission was to defend Paris ; but Paris was not going to be attacked. On the other hand, there was the German First Army making a flank march across the north-east of the capital, actually inviting attack and offering a temptation almost impossible to resist. General Joffre had, however, laid down a retirement behind the Seine as an essential preliminary before an offensive could be contemplated ; but by that time the golden opportunity of striking at the exposed German right wing might have passed away. The salient features of the situation as they appeared to General Galliéni were as follows : a mere sortie by the French Sixth Army would be inefficacious, but a general offensive by the whole French forces in the field, aided by the Sixth Army, and using Paris as a *point d'appui* might be productive of enormous result. In these circumstances General Galliéni determined to make arrangements for an advance by his Sixth Army, and to communicate his views to General Joffre and the commander of the British Army, Sir John French. The assumption of the offensive at the earliest possible moment being the desire of each of

the three commanders any divergence of opinion was sure to be but on matters of detail ; and telephonic communication with General Galliéni removed from the mind of the French Commander-in-Chief any lingering doubt as to the advisability of falling in with his subordinate's views. General Joffre, indeed, was not slow to realize that a chance not often to be met with in war was now offered him, and he determined to end his retirement, to turn against the enemy and to engage *à fond* all along his line. Shortly before midnight on the 4th September he issued his initial orders in which he stated that advantage must be taken of the perilous position of the German First Army by concentrating against it the efforts of the Allied armies on the extreme left. All necessary preparations were to be made during the 5th for an attack on the 6th September.

Briefly summarized the situation of the Allied armies and the orders of General Joffre for the great battle of the Marne were as follows :—

*The Sixth Army* was to the north-east of Paris ; it was to be ready to cross the Ourcq between Lizy and May-en-Multien in the general direction of Château Thierry.

*The 1st Cavalry Corps*, also about Paris, was to be handed over to the commander of the Sixth Army for the above operation.

*The British Army*, which was behind the Grand Morin, was to establish itself on the line Changis-Coulommiers facing east, ready to attack in the general direction of Montmirail.

*The Fifth Army*, which extended from about Courtaçon towards Sezanne, was to be ready to attack generally from south to north.

*The 2nd Cavalry Corps* was to ensure connection between the British and the Fifth Armies.

*The Ninth Army* in the centre was to cover the right of the Fifth Army by holding the southern outlet of the St. Gond Marshes and by placing part of its forces on the tableland north of Sezanne.

*The Fourth and Third Armies* were, generally speaking, on the line Sompuis-Sermaize ; Revigny-Souilly-Verdun. They were to act in co-ordination in attacking the enemy. The Third Army covering itself against attack from the north-east was to attack the left flank of the enemy marching west of the Argonne.

These orders were followed up on the 6th by a significant order of the day which ran as follows : " At the moment when a battle on which the welfare of the country is about to begin I have to remind all ranks that the time for looking back is past. Every effort must be made to attack the enemy and hurl him back. Troops which find advance impossible must stand their ground at all costs and die rather than give way. This is a moment when no faltering will be tolerated."

The whole situation in the west was now dominated by General von Kluck who had taken the bit between his teeth and was acting in complete variance with orders. He had been strictly enjoined on the 3rd September to follow in echelon behind the Second Army of General von Bülow and to be responsible for the protection of the German right ; but so far from being in the position enjoined General von Kluck's columns were hurrying over the Marne a day's march in front of von Bülow. This was an added complication for Supreme Headquarters who were forced to

draw up a new plan in view of the reports of the strengthening of the French left wing. It was during the evening of the 4th September that the new directive was brought to the First Army. The essential point of it was that any attempt to force even the bulk of the French Army towards the Swiss frontier was no longer practicable. The German First and Second Armies were now to face west towards Paris, the former between the Oise and Marne and the latter between Marne and Seine. On the left of the whole German line the Fourth and Fifth Armies by a determined advance were to open a passage across the Moselle for the Sixth and Seventh Armies, while the Third Army in the centre was to push south and to be ready to assist either wing as required. Thus German Supreme Headquarters were forced to throw to the winds the hopes founded on the great wheel of five armies pivoting on Thionville; and, instead, were compelled to assign to these armies three divergent *axes de marche* towards the west, south and south-east.

The scheme of a great left wheel pivoting on Thionville had now gone by the board, for by his new order Moltke had definitely cut himself adrift from the plan of operations as devised by Schlieffen. The right wing had been starved of troops, and of the three armies on the right the strength had been reduced from thirty-four divisions to twenty-three. Moltke now reverted to his conception of two decisive battles, one—the first—in the east, and the second to be fought in the neighbourhood of Paris. While the first decision was being sought the First and Second Armies were to remain upon the defensive; and, to assist them in the great battle in the west, arrangements were made to transport part of the Seventh Army from Lorraine to the German right wing. Thus the Allies and the

Germans were each about to take the offensive, but with different intentions and in areas which did not coincide. General Joffre's battlefield was marked on the left and right by Paris and Verdun, and his general aim was to bring about an envelopment of the First to Fifth German Armies on both flanks. Moltke hoped to fight and win two battles, of which the first to be fought would extend the zone of fighting to Nancy and south of it. General Joffre's plan was the simpler and more manageable, and he had the advantage that he had made the necessary transfer of troops sooner than had his opponent. Right through the battle the singleness of his aim enabled him to enforce his will upon the enemy.

Meanwhile General von Kluck was still bent on pushing ahead. Instead of remaining between the Oise and Marne he continued to pour his columns over the latter river, leaving the Fourth Reserve Corps on the Ourcq to act as a flank guard. Units of that corps became engaged about noon on the 5th September with troops of the French Sixth Army which was getting into position for the passage of the Ourcq at Lizy and May-en-Multien. The battle of the Marne had begun.

During the day General von Kluck had at last resolved to exhibit some deference to the orders issued from General Headquarters relative to taking up a position between the Oise and the Marne. This would imply a retrograde movement by the First Army, the bulk of which was now on the wrong side of the latter river, but General von Kluck believed there was no particular occasion for hurry, and he fixed no definite time when the withdrawal across the Marne should begin. But the reports which kept coming in about the activity of the French Sixth Army brought home



to him the need for action, and urgent orders were sent to his IInd Corps to fall back early on the 6th and to go to the assistance of the hardly pressed IVth Reserve Corps on the Ourcq.

The 6th September was the opening day of the battle proper, and early in the day the French Sixth Army moved forward towards the Ourcq with both flanks protected by cavalry. The bulk of the fighting took place on the French right wing, and on the extreme right the struggle was severe. Barcy was taken and retaken three times, and it was now clear to General Maunoury, the commander of the Sixth Army, that the IVth Reserve Corps was being reinforced. Enemy columns were seen moving to the field, and these were the vanguard of the IInd Corps which General von Kluck had recalled to the Ourcq.

General von Kluck could, however, reinforce his right flank on the Ourcq only at the expense of his front on the Marne, and consequently the British Army noticed a marked slackening in the advance of the German First Army. Put briefly, the relative situation of that army was about to change. From facing south it began to face west. What had been its right flank—composed of the IVth Reserve Corps and a cavalry division—was by successive reinforcements to become the front ; while the original front, by a corresponding diminution, was to become the left flank. The French Sixth Army, which had been attacking a flank guard, soon found itself committed to an attack of the First Army in front ; while the British who had had the bulk of the German First Army facing them were, later, to deal merely with a flank or rear guard. A comprehension of this reversal of rôles will be found to be the key to the fighting on the Ourcq and Marne.

It was during the afternoon of the 5th September that the British Army received its orders for the part it was to play in the great battle of the Marne ; but when the battalions left their billets early on the following day there were many in the ranks who thought that another day's withdrawal was to begin. So soon as the soldiers discovered that their route lay northward roars of cheering burst from the ranks, and the enthusiasm displayed left a lasting impression on those who shared in that memorable day. The slowing down which had been apparent in the advance of the German First Army was soon followed by an unmistakable retrograde movement. The British lost no time in seizing the high ground south of Coulommiers, and by evening the advanced-guards had reached the line of river, east and west of that town. Save for some fighting early in the morning about Rozoy—an action brought on by the Germans to cover their retirement—the British Army was not seriously engaged throughout the day.

In the orders issued by General Joffre on the 4th September the Fifth Army of General Franchet d'Esperey had been ordered to close slightly to its left and to be ready to attack in a northerly direction. Some progress had been made in accordance with these orders on the 5th. On the 6th September the mission of the Fifth Army was to attack, in the general direction of Montmirail, with its right wing thrown forward, an operation designed to coincide with the advance of the Sixth Army on the Ourcq, and to aim at enclosing the whole of the First and portion of the Second Army of the Germans. General Franchet d'Esperey sent his army forward at dawn. It was disposed from left to right as follows : the 18th Corps, 3rd Corps, 1st Corps, 10th Corps, with the Reserve Divisions in

second line. Immediately a violent battle developed all along the line, due to the fact that the Germans had also received orders to advance and thus precipitated an encounter battle. In the fighting which ensued the French showed themselves undoubted masters of the enemy. On the left the 18th Corps seized Courtaçon during the day. It was assisted by General Conneau's 2nd Cavalry Corps, which was operating on the left flank and maintaining touch with the British Army, a task which it performed admirably, finally halting for the night on a line east and west through Choisy. In the centre, after a particularly fierce artillery preparation, the 3rd Corps seized two villages which were obstinately held by the Germans. On the right the 1st Corps gained possession of Chatillon-sur-Morin, which had defied their efforts for several hours, and after darkness had set in it continued its efforts, eventually clearing the Germans out of Esternay. From here the 10th Corps carried on the line, with its right thrown well forward, and that flank gained touch with the Ninth Army west of the Marshes of St. Gond.

The fighting round Sezanne had been long and bitter. The Germans had placed many machine guns in position, and they thoroughly searched the wooded ridges, from which the French attack was expected to develop, with artillery fire. The French guns replied, and an artillery duel went on for some hours, until it seemed that the German guns had been silenced and that it was time for the French infantry to go forward. Against the green background the *pantalons rouges* of the attackers showed up like scarlet waves as they moved on with the bayonet, and with such a target the German machine guns were able to do great execution. The French fell "like corn before the

sickle," and to complete their discomfiture many were killed by the fire of their own artillery. The check to the French had, however, only been temporary, and after a day of brilliant fighting the front of the Fifth Army may be said to have been marked by the line Courtaçon—Esternay and thence north-east.

The whole French countryside between Paris and Verdun was now ablaze, five French and one British army contending with the five German armies which had set out originally with the intention by pivoting on Thionville to roll up the Allied line towards the east; while south of the fortress of Verdun severe fighting was in progress round the Grand Couronné of Nancy. For the moment, however, interest in the struggle is confined to the fighting on the western flank within the area roughly marked out by the towns Betz-Meaux-Coulommiers-Château Thierry. In this great pocket General von Kluck's soldiers were fighting desperately to keep off the converging movement of their opponents, while, on the side of the Allies, the French Sixth Army, the British Army and the French Fifth Army were struggling to nip the German First Army off from the main body of the invaders.

The fighting on the Ourcq during the 7th September was destined to be very severe. Each of the commanders was determined to attack. On the French side General Maunoury had rather overestimated the success of the Fifth Army as reported to him, and was inclined to believe that the Germans might fight merely a delaying action on the Ourcq. As a matter of fact, the exact contrary was the case. General von Kluck clearly recognized that not only his task of safeguarding the whole German right, but even the preservation of his own army depended on hurling

back the attack launched against him from the direction of Paris. By an order issued by him at 5.30 p.m. on the 6th another corps—the IVth—was withdrawn across the Marne and hurried on through the night to reinforce the new front. Thus, on the morning of the 7th September, the IIInd Corps, the IVth Reserve Corps, and the IVth Corps were in position along or close to the Ourcq, covered on the north by the 4th Cavalry Division. The original right flank guard had now been strengthened out of recognition, but General von Kluck had come to realize that it was no time for half measures. Even at the cost of seriously weakening his line facing the British, even at the risk of opening a gap between himself and the Second Army on his left, every available man must be sent off to the Ourcq. Accordingly still more corps—the IXth and IIIrd—were ordered to march during the forenoon of the 7th to the river north-east of Betz. These corps had, only the night before, been lent to the Second Army, but General von Bülow had now perforce to return them. The effect of this repayment was that a gap, soon to yawn into a fissure of thirty miles, was to open between the First and Second Armies, and into this gap the British Army and the left of the French Fifth Army were rapidly pouring. General von Kluck now found himself committed to an isolated battle on the Ourcq facing west and with his left and rear exposed. Unless he could hold off Sir John French and General Franchet d'Esperey sufficiently long to enable him to crush the French Sixth Army, and then turn to deal with the danger to his left flank and rear he was a beaten general. The task, however, was to prove too great. He had not the time, and even had he the time he had not the necessary men.

So far as the actual fighting of the day is concerned

the bulk of it fell on the French Sixth Army. General Maunoury's left flank had been reinforced by the cavalry corps of General Sordet as well as by the 61st Reserve Division which had been railed from Paris. At dawn the army was set in motion and at first some progress was made, but gradually the weight of reinforcements reaching the Germans began to tell. The II<sup>nd</sup> and IV<sup>th</sup> Corps had now become available, and as each division arrived it was thrown at once into the fight. Strong German columns debouched between May-en-Multien and Betz, and within this area the fighting was especially severe. As has so often happened on French battlefields a cemetery was the scene of most obstinate fighting, five hundred dead being subsequently counted in an area of little more than two hundred square yards. Around a group of farm buildings in one part of the field the battle raged with particular fierceness, and the buildings changed hands several times throughout the day. Here a body of the French 298th Regiment fell to the last man, preferring death to surrender, but when darkness fell two companies of the regiment avenged the loss of their comrades by a desperate hand-to-hand attack in which they captured a colour of the 38th Magdeburg Fusiliers decorated with the Iron Cross. After a day of hard fighting the French Sixth Army had made some progress, and its front ran generally from the south of Barcy, thence through that village along the rolling downs to the high ground west of Etavigny. The *moral* of the French troops facing the Ourcq at the close of the 7th December was high; and General Maunoury determined to exploit it by an attempt to outflank General von Kluck's right wing with the cavalry corps and the 61st Reserve Division on the following day.



The German general was, however, committed to a similar attempt to outflank the French left, and the centre of gravity of the whole battle of the Marne was now shifting to the area round Betz.

The reinforcements hurried off to strengthen the German line upon the Ourcq had left a comparatively small force to withstand the British, and the task of holding back the army of Sir John French was now being carried out mainly by German cavalry, reinforced as was the German custom by Jäger battalions and infantry units. In General Joffre's initial orders for the battle the direction assigned for the advance of the British Army had been practically due east ; but the course of the battle had necessitated a change in the original instructions. The French general had apparently expected either a continuation of the German advance south or south-east, or, in the event of a suspension of that operation, the withdrawal of the German First Army in an easterly direction. General von Kluck had, however, shown every intention of pushing west so as to thrust back the French Sixth Army, and in these circumstances it was clear that a more northerly advance would bring the British on General von Kluck's communications. Orders were consequently issued by Sir John French directing the march of the British on the Grand Morin River, which was to be passed with all possible speed on the 7th September.

The British cavalry acted everywhere with great vigour, and particularly on the right where the Second Cavalry Brigade was operating. On this flank a spirited cavalry action took place, and a charge by a troop and a half of the 9th Lancers effectually dealt with a squadron of Guard Dragoons, the fate of the latter being sealed by dismounted fire

action by the 18th Hussars. Later a squadron of the Hussars holding a position dismounted was charged by a German squadron, but by the musketry of the Hussars the attackers were almost annihilated. A few passed through the firing line only to be accounted for by the horseholders in rear. By evening the bulk of the German cavalry had fallen back to the Petit Morin south-east of La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, and the British had reached a position about half-way between the two rivers. On the left was the Third Corps (less the 6th Division still in England); the Second Corps was in the centre, and the First Corps carried on the line to the right.

The French Fifth Army no less than the British felt the relaxation of pressure caused by the withdrawal of German troops across the Marne, and the task of its left and centre was really one of pursuit which was carried out in the general direction of Montmirail. The Germans held their ground stoutly, but finally the French 18th and 3rd Corps were able to reach a line running due east from La Ferté Gaucher, which represented a gain of some six miles of ground. Further to the right the fighting had been considerably more severe, and about noon General Franchet d'Esperey had received word from General Foch that the left of the Ninth Army was being violently attacked and in sore need of assistance. Two corps of the Fifth Army were, therefore, sent off in response to these cries for help.

By the evening of the 7th September the orders of General Joffre *profiter de la situation aventurée de la I<sup>re</sup> Armée allemande* were three days old, but that army was still in being and fighting tenaciously. Further, the geographical objectives assigned by the French generalissimo were far from having been

attained. The French Sixth Army had been ordered to force the passage of the Ourcq and then to advance *en direction générale* de Château Thierry, while the British Army was to attack towards Montmirail. But by the evening of the 7th the passage of the Ourcq was still unaccomplished, and until that crossing had been achieved Château Thierry and Montmirail were mere names. A somewhat disquieting feature of the day, too, was the intention of the Germans to turn the Paris-Verdun line at Nancy and Troyon, where a successful German thrust would very seriously discount the French efforts on the Ourcq. Worse still, during the day Maubeuge fell, and the invaders thus not only gained another line of railway, but had now one more corps available for operations in the field. Against these drawbacks, however, could be set the fact that the gap between the German First and Second Armies had considerably widened, and unless the Germans could keep the British and French Fifth Army out of that breach their situation on the Ourcq must become untenable.

During the night of the 7th-8th General Galliéni took steps to reinforce the French Sixth Army, chiefly by the 4th Corps, which had been railed from the east and placed at his disposal by General Joffre. The 8th September was remarkable for the violence of the German attacks along the Ourcq. General Maunoury's plan was to attack with his right-centre and left, while his centre was ordered to hold its ground at all costs. Against that portion of General Maunoury's line the Germans attacked with such vehemence that a week later the streets of some of the villages were still blocked with the bodies of the slain. To the north the outflanking movement of the French was brought to a standstill, while even the superb gallantry of a

division of Zouaves in the right-centre failed to make any considerable impression on the enemy. During the afternoon General Galliéni visited the commander of the Sixth Army and found him a prey to a certain depression of spirit. The Military Governor of Paris reassured him somewhat by pointing out that the greater the resistance offered by the Germans on the Ourcq the less opposition would the British probably meet in their advance. Nevertheless, General Maunoury considered it advisable to make arrangements for a possible withdrawal on the following day.

But meanwhile the inexorable and methodical advance of the British was discounting the efforts which General von Kluck was making west of the Ourcq. After considering alternatives of action by which assistance could be rendered to the French Sixth Army, Sir John French decided that the best method implied the speedy passage of the Petit Morin and Marne rivers, for after passing the latter the British would be facing north-west and would thus be directly threatening the line of retreat of the German First Army. Orders were accordingly issued for a general attack along the line of the Petit Morin to begin early on the 8th. At first the march was undisturbed, but on reaching the river it was soon realized that the German cavalry would not yield without a struggle, especially as the steep valley covered with small but thick woods was favourable for the defence. Some severe fighting ensued, but by evening the British had made good the Petit Morin, and on their right were in touch with the 2nd Cavalry Corps of the French.

Wednesday the 9th September—a day of high wind and drenching rain—was to witness General von Kluck's last effort on the Ourcq. His IXth Corps was now in position to initiate an enveloping movement

against the left of the French Sixth Army. General Maunoury's troops were at the end of their strength, and a determined attack delivered by the Germans from the direction of Betz bore down the French resistance. The 8th Division of the 4th Corps had been summoned from the Marne to reinforce the French left, but it could not be brought effectively into action. Meanwhile Nanteuil on the French left flank was lost, but later a French division, flanked by the 1st Cavalry Corps, struggled northwards towards Nanteuil in a desperate effort to retrieve the day. General von Kluck, however, had shot his bolt. During the day the British Army crossed the Marne, and on its right the 18th Corps of the French Fifth Army gained possession of Château Thierry. The Marne was not resolutely defended, apparently through an error of judgment on the part of the commander of a German mixed detachment specially told off to reinforce the cavalry at the crossings, with the result that not only were the bridges west of Château Thierry intact, but this strip of the river was practically undefended. Something important was evidently taking place in the German First Army, and British airmen all through the afternoon reported long trains of German transport moving north.

So far only a portion of the whole battle of the Marne has been described, for the operations related until now have been those of merely one sector, the left, i.e. the Allied left. It is now necessary, before dealing with the conclusion of the struggle, to note what had been taking place in the other portions of the arena which may with sufficient accuracy be described as the centre and right.

While success was attending the Allied arms on the left, in the centre the French were forced back, and

for a time it looked as if in that quarter their line might be broken and that the hard-won victory they had secured on the Ourcq might be discounted by this mischance. The centre of the Allied line was held by the French Ninth Army, under General Foch, to whom orders had been given "to cover the right of the Fifth Army by holding the southern outlets of the St. Gond Marshes and by placing part of its forces on the tableland north of Sezanne." These marshes were an important feature extending for about ten to twelve miles from east to west, and of a breadth varying from one to two miles. The marshland is formed by a pocket of clay through which flows the Petit Morin, here a very small stream, which has its springs in the marshland, and the affluents of which have been canalized to prevent flooding. Across this obstacle led two highways from Sezanne to Epernay and from Fère Champenoise to Rheims, respectively. Between these roads country tracks crossed the bog, none of them engineered or metalled and liable in rainy weather to be submerged. The swamp formed a natural barrier against a German advance, and both roads were commanded on the French side by tactical features, the western by the high ground of Mondement and the eastern by Mont Août.

It will be remembered that the last German directive issued before the battle of the Marne had laid down that the Third Army in the centre was to push south and to be prepared to support right or left as circumstances might require, while the Second Army was to move into position between the Marne and Seine preparatory to taking up a position facing Paris. In the centre of the field the mission of the Germans was, therefore, to attack while a defensive policy had been enjoined on General Foch. The latter had against



him the left of von Bülow's Second Army and the whole of the Third Army, under the Saxon General von Hausen, and besides being outnumbered was conspicuously weak in artillery. On his right between himself and the French Fourth Army was a gap, filled to some extent, however, by the 9th Cavalry Division.

The story of the battle from the 6th to the 9th September in this quarter of the field may be summarized by the statement that it represented a savage thrust by the Germans to push General Foch's left off the tableland north of Sezanne, while at the same time an equally strenuous endeavour was made to roll up his right—attempts which General Foch was able to withstand partly by the tactical advantages of his position, partly by the assistance generously afforded him by the armies on his right and left, and particularly by the superb gallantry of his troops and his own unflinching resolve to meet attack with attack. On the left Mondement was the scene of the most stubborn and severe fighting. It was held on the 7th by the French, but only by the narrowest margin, and this was counteracted by the enforced retirement of the right wing of the army against superior numbers. When dawn broke on the 9th September the situation of General Foch's Army was everywhere precarious. Mondement had just been seized by the Germans, and a French counter-attack broke down. At all hazards, however, the place must be retaken if the French left was to hold the tableland of Sezanne, and a further French attempt was made early in the afternoon but with no better result. Finally, at six o'clock in the evening a final effort was made, and this time the valour of the French troops was rewarded and the château once again was in French hands. In the centre and on the right of the Ninth Army there was

also considerable ground for anxiety during the day. On the right the 11th Corps was forced still further back. It retired as far as Salon, and in sympathy with this movement the 9th Corps in the centre had to release its grip of the southern exits of the marshes. General Foch, however, had made some provision for dealing with this mishap, for quite early in the morning he had refused to allow himself to be hypnotized by the severe fighting on his left, and had withdrawn one division to form a General Reserve so soon as he had satisfied himself that assistance from the Fifth Army on his left would be forthcoming. All day long this 42nd Division was hurrying behind the front marching eastward, it being General Foch's intention to launch it in an attack against the flank of the Germans who were dealing so roughly with his right. By 4 p.m. the 42nd Division was concentrated in rear of the centre, and orders were sent to it to counter-attack in the direction of Fère Champenoise, a movement which was to be assisted by a general offensive all along the line. Not much progress had been made when darkness fell, and when the advance was resumed the following morning the German offensive was over, and everywhere their armies were in retreat. But before narrating how General Headquarters on the German side threw up the sponge it will be necessary to provide a brief description of what had been taking place meanwhile on the right of the Allied line.

The right was formed by the French Fourth and Third Armies. In no quarter of the field was the fighting more severe; in no portion of the field did the Allied line present greater danger; and nowhere on the long front were the bravery and tenacity of the Third and Fourth Armies surpassed. The change in the German plan forced upon the German General

Headquarters just before the battle of the Marne exposed the Allied right to especial danger. When the Germans renounced the immense left wheel pivoting on Thionville, orders were given to their Fourth and Fifth Armies to move south-eastwards, while the Sixth and Seventh were to take the offensive against the line of the Moselle, it being hoped that these co-ordinated movements might bring about a great if restricted Sedan. The new German plan was, therefore, to cut off Verdun on either side. The Crown Prince, with his Fifth Army, was to proceed round the entrenched camp by the west ; the Fourth Army, with its right passing through Vitry-le-François, was to bear down across the flat lands of Champagne ; on the other side, the Sixth and Seventh Armies were to advance eastwards across the Moselle. Inside this great converging movement, which might possibly be assisted by the Third Army, it was possible that the French First, Second, Third and Fourth Armies might be herded together and destroyed.

Had these four French armies been able to unite their efforts to a common end their position would have been less precarious. Such unity of action was, however, not easy. The action of General Sarrail's Third Army was to be co-ordinated rather with that of General Maunoury on the Ourcq than with the French Second Army in front of Nancy. In the original orders for the battle of the Marne General Sarrail was to strike westwards against the Crown Prince's flank in a movement reciprocal to that by which General Maunoury struck against General von Kluck ; and this movement, though it would assist in a double flanking operation against the whole German mass between Paris and Verdun had the disadvantage that it ignored the danger to the Third Army's rear. Behind General

Sarrail was the Meuse, held only by a chain of semi-obsolete *forts d'arrêt*, while but a few miles further east was the great German fortress of Metz, within which large forces might be accumulating from all parts of Germany. The concealment afforded by a large fortress is apt to have a disconcerting effect upon an enemy operating in the vicinity. Paris had surprised the Germans by emitting a large field army at the critical moment, and it was not impossible that General Sarrail might find himself exposed to a similar danger from Metz.

Fortunately for the French the German Crown Prince based his advance upon a misconception. He considered that Verdun would be left by the French to its fate, and in his orders to his Fifth Army issued on the 5th September he prescribed the advance of his troops for the following day to be the line Revigny-Bar-le-Duc. General Sarrail, however, all through the battle kept hold of the fortress with his right and, further, arranged with the commandant of the place for the co-operation of the mobile garrison with his army. As a result the German Crown Prince, far from being able to ignore Verdun and to plunge due south, found himself compelled to face generally to the east, and his communications then ran roughly parallel to his front, a disadvantage which needs no comment.

To describe in any detail the struggle in the eastern sector of the battle it must be remembered that the French Fourth Army had opposite to it the left of the German Third and the whole of the Fourth Army, under the Duke of Württemberg. Each side had been ordered to attack, and fighting of a particularly severe nature ensued. On the eve of the battle the line of the French Fourth Army had run generally from the vicinity of Sompuis on the left, south of Vitry-le-

François to Sermaize upon the right, and when retreat set in upon the German side the French Fourth Army was, practically speaking, on the same line as that from which it had started the battle. That it was able to maintain its ground against the heavy attacks directed against it was due to the tenacity of its units and also to the fact that upon the 9th it was reinforced, and its left strengthened, by the 21st Corps from the First Army on the extreme French right. When the battle opened the Fourth Army was not very favourably situated for opening the offensive, for although it was in touch with the Third Army to the right there was a wide gap between its left and General Foch's army, which was only imperfectly filled by the 9th Cavalry Division. This fact led the Duke of Württemberg to strengthen his own left, with the result that Sermaize was lost to the French, and for a time there was serious risk that the right flank of the Fourth Army might be rolled up. General Langle de Cary was compelled to call upon the Third Army for assistance. Throughout the 8th September the Fourth Army was actually overlapped on both flanks, but eventually the arrival of the 21st Corps from Alsace restored the situation, and the following day General Langle de Cary was able to reinforce his left with two more divisions. The fighting had been everywhere severe, and even as late as nightfall on the 9th September there was no indication of the Allied victory so clearly revealed in the centre and west.

As for the Third Army, in General Joffre's instructions of the 1st September it had been laid down that the retirement behind the Seine would imply for the Third Army a march to the country north of Bar-le-Duc, and on the following day it was even thought that it might have to fall back as far as Joinville.



General Sarraill was strongly opposed to any movement which would imply the isolation of Verdun, and he took it upon himself to maintain his right in touch with the fortress while refusing his left, thus bringing his front on to an alignment generally facing west. The situation of his army, which resulted from a divergence from the orders given him, fitted in admirably, as it turned out, with General Joffre's later sudden decision to suspend his retirement and adopt the offensive; and General Sarraill, having refused to separate his right from Verdun, now went a step further and issued a positive order to the fortress commander to co-operate with the mobile garrison. The latter complied and moved out the 72nd Reserve Division south-west of the fortress, and on the 6th September these troops attacked trains and parks belonging to the enemy, throwing them into considerable confusion.

The orders to General Sarraill of the 5th September had enjoined him to attack westwards, while covering himself against a hostile attack from the north; but reconnaissances having established the advance of strong enemy forces east of the Argonne the sense of the order had to be reversed, for to avoid exposing his communications General Sarraill considered it advisable to attack in a northerly direction with the bulk of his army, while maintaining the remainder on the defensive facing west. This action on his part led to some friction with French General Headquarters, whose appreciation of the situation led to the issue of instructions which were practically to the effect that assistance should be rendered to the Fourth Army even at the cost of leaving Verdun to shift for itself. General Sarraill was thus placed in the position of having either to act against his better judgment or to disobey



orders, but luckily the arrival of the 15th Corps, from the Second Army, enabled him to give satisfaction to Headquarters, while at the same time still maintaining his hold on Verdun.

General Sarraill's position on the 7th September was, however, critical, for reports which had been coming in all day pointed to considerable activity by the enemy on the heights of the Meuse in his rear. Between Verdun and Toul these heights slope gradually down to the river and are broken at intervals by a series of deep and precipitous ravines which were guarded by numerous forts on either bank. Against one of these—Fort Troyon—enemy troops were reported on the 7th to be on the march from Metz. Troyon was by no means a large fort and was of somewhat old-fashioned design, consisting of a grass-grown perimeter, inside which were deep, wide ramparts and ditches with vaults and walls of earth, masonry and iron, the armament consisting of 6.1-inch guns in steel cupolas. On the 8th it was exposed to such a severe bombardment that before noon several of the French guns had been put out of action. During the morning the commandant of Verdun sent a telephone message to the effect that the success of the battle west of Verdun depended on Fort Troyon holding out, an appeal which steeled the garrison to resist to the last man. All through the 9th the bombardment continued, and during the night of the 9th-10th the Germans tried to carry the fort by storm. The attempt was repulsed, and on the 10th a French cavalry division and a mixed brigade from Toul brought much-needed assistance to the garrison. News had now come in of the retreat of the armies on the German right and in the centre, and General Sarraill pushed forward his left wing, but the struggle on his right was still so intense that during

the evening arrangements were made for the abandonment of Verdun in case of need. The German Crown Prince was, however, already in retreat, the set-back near Paris having reacted on his portion of the line.

The operations against Fort Troyon are usually regarded as marking the extreme limit on the east of the battle of the Marne, but it is necessary to refer briefly to the great German attack against Nancy some thirty-five miles further to the south-east. It has been described how, after the failure of the plan based on the great left wheel pivoting on Thionville, the German Supreme Command directed the Fourth and Fifth Armies by a determined advance to open a passage across the Moselle for the Sixth and Seventh Armies. Thus, although the fighting round Nancy, was in a sense distinct from and—to a certain extent—overshadowed by the great battle of the Marne, the two battles reacted upon each other to a remarkable extent. A defeat of the French round the city would have enabled the bulk of the German Sixth and Seventh Armies to have worked round in rear of General Sarrail's Third Army, which had all it could do to hold off the Fifth Army of the Crown Prince and to maintain its grip on Verdun. That the importance attached by German Headquarters to the capture of Nancy was considerable is shown by the fact that the German Emperor betook himself to that quarter of the field to inspire his troops with his presence.

After the disastrous battle of Morhange, in Lorraine, on the 20th August General de Castlenau had withdrawn the French Second Army to the chain of hills surrounding Nancy on the east, known as the Grand Couronné, and consisting of considerable heights which are well wooded and noticeable for their terraced

character ; and in sympathy with this retirement the French First Army to the south had to swing back its left and abandon several passes in the Vosges. On the 4th September the former of these two armies was posted with its left about Pont-à-Mousson, its centre in front of Nancy and its right on the Mortagne, while the First Army continued the line from Gerbeviller to the south of St. Dié. Both armies had been skimmed to find troops for other sectors of the battle, and even during the fighting round Nancy were also drawn on. The German Sixth and Seventh Armies outnumbered the French, and the German plan in this quarter of the field was that the Seventh Army should pin the French First Army to its ground, and then transfer forces to the Sixth Army for the great assault on Nancy. On the 4th September began the artillery bombardment, and the crisis of the struggle for Nancy came on the 7th. Under the eyes of the Emperor the Bavarians concentrated their efforts on breaking the French centre, and after a violent bombardment ten battalions rushed a portion of the position. But the fire of the French guns stayed the attack, and although the struggle was renewed upon the 8th with indomitable bravery by the Bavarian troops, the impetus began to weaken and the attack ended in a total and costly failure. Instead of participating in a triumphal entry into Nancy the Emperor had been forced to witness the annihilation of some of his finest troops, and the splendid resistance of General Castelnau's Army deprived the Germans of any chance of retrieving their defeat, on the right and in the centre of their long line, by a success in Lorraine.

There now remains only to be narrated the circumstances attending the decision of German Supreme Headquarters to acknowledge failure and to break off

the battle of the Marne. In the German Army there prevailed and had existed as far back as the Franco-German War a system by which General Staff Officers, known as liaison officers, were frequently sent as representatives of the Higher Command to the headquarters of armies during the course of operations. These liaison officers were in no sense mere messengers, but rather plenipotentiaries from the Brain of the Army ; that is to say, they were expected to explain doubtful points in orders, and were even empowered on their own responsibility to amend such orders or to issue such new ones as might be rendered necessary by a change of circumstances, provided that the new or amended orders were in harmony with the general spirit of the original directive.

Such a liaison officer was Lieutenant-Colonel Hentsch, a Saxon officer, head of the Intelligence at Supreme Headquarters. On the 8th September Supreme Headquarters, which were at Luxembourg, more than one hundred miles behind the German right wing, had lost control of the battle, and the news that there was imminent danger of a break through by the British Army between the First and Second Armies, and that the latter army was also in severe straits on its left flank, led to the despatch of Lieutenant-Colonel Hentsch in his capacity of liaison officer at 10 a.m. on that date. He was instructed to motor to each army headquarters, beginning with the Fifth Army on the left, and—to use his own words—he was empowered by General von Moltke, the Chief of the General Staff, to order, in case of need, a retirement of all these five armies behind the River Vesle and level with the northern edge of the Argonne. Remarkable though it may seem these orders were not given him in writing, but verbally, a circumstance upon which Lieutenant-

Colonel Hentsch commented to his two subordinates while on his journey. He also considered it strange that a more senior officer was not sent on a mission of such immense importance. He hinted pretty plainly to his companions that he had been designedly selected as a convenient scapegoat in the event of the loss of the battle by the Germans, and it may here be said that his prognostication was justified.

During the 8th the envoy visited the headquarters of the Fifth, Fourth and Third Armies in turn and satisfied himself that the two former armies at any rate could, generally speaking, maintain their position. In the evening or late afternoon he arrived at the headquarters of the Second Army and discussed the situation thoroughly with General von Bülow and the latter's Chief of Staff and head of the Operations Section. The army commander and his two staff officers were calm and confident, and the idea of retreat was deferred, if not ruled out of court. But with the morning of the 9th this resolution cooled, and the fact that the right of the Second Army had during the night been driven back by the French Fifth Army, coupled with the news of the steady advance of the British towards the Marne and into the gap between the Second Army and the First, led General von Bülow to issue definite instructions for the retirement of his army. His own version is that this resolve was made in agreement with Lieutenant-Colonel Hentsch, but three years later Ludendorff, in an official memorandum, expressly states that the decision was made by General von Bülow independently and on his own responsibility. Colonel Hentsch then motored to the headquarters of the First Army, where he arrived about midday, after some delay caused by panic among the German troops through

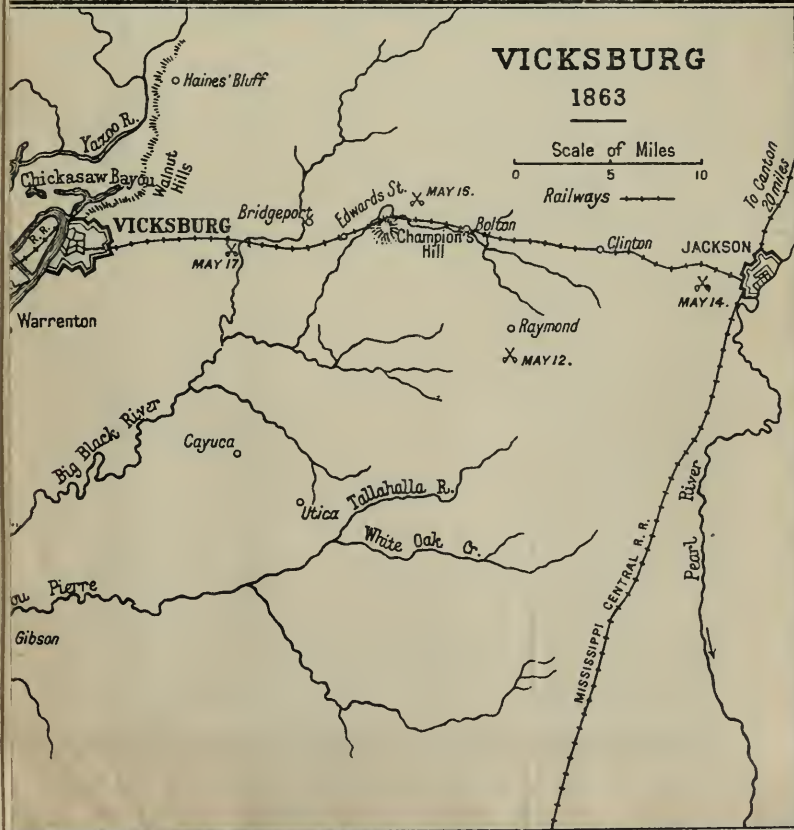


which he had to pass. Oddly enough he was not brought to General von Kluck, but carried out his business with the General Staff of the First Army, and after some discussion Colonel Hentsch used his plenipotentiary powers and gave the order for the First Army to retreat. In this action he was, in the opinion of Ludendorff, justified, for the case provided for in his instructions—the initiation of rearward movements—had already begun. There has, however, been a recrudescence in Germany to save the face of Supreme Headquarters at the expense of Colonel Hentsch's reputation.

Thus tamely petered out the grandiose German plan, and thus ended the great and decisive battle of the Marne. To understand its claim to be regarded as a decisive battle of the world it is necessary to look beyond the mere tactical narrative of the contest. Tactically, indeed, it was somewhat of a disappointment to the Allies. No part of the German host was annihilated, or even immobilized for any length of time. The number both of trophies and prisoners was inconsiderable. The Germans broke off the fight at their own time. No great pursuit such as had succeeded Jena took place, and the Germans were able to retire, if not unscathed, at any rate, in fair order. From the strategic and moral aspects, however, the battle was of immense importance. It marked for the Allies the definite turn in the tide of defeat, while for the Germans, no less, it signified the collapse of the plan with which they had entered the war and on which their Great General Staff had been prepared to hazard the fate of the Fatherland. That plan had aimed at securing a rapid decision in France with the bulk of the German armies, and the subsequent and immediate prosecution of a second campaign against the more



slowly mobilizing strength of Russia. But by the 10th September the Germans had definitely acknowledged defeat in France, and not for nothing has the Marne been called by the Germans themselves Die Wendepunkt—the *turning-point*—of the war.





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